

MAA INTERNATIONAL

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

MAA International (MAA) is committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards in every area of our work and to a process of continuous improvement but recognise that complaints, grievances and disputes may occur within any organisation.

MAA views complaints as opportunities of continuous improvement and to ensure all associates of MAA are dealt with fairly.

MAA also recognises that external bodies may need avenues to raise complaints with MAA.

Therefore, MAA values and take seriously any received feedback or complaints and makes a commitment to handle, respond and seek a fair resolution of all complaints in an efficient and equitable manner.

This policy is intended to ensure that MAA handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To streamline the complaints handling procedure.
- To ensure that all the relevant people at MAA know what to do if a complaint is received
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To ensure transparent and fair procedures are in place.
- To ensure that MAA responds to complaints in an impartial and timely manner
- To commit to keeping strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process
- To commit to the continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services

1.2 POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors, partners, and board members, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about MAA, regarding aid programmes, services, staff, or the complaint handling process.

This policy covers complaints made by members of the community and all relevant stakeholders affected by our programs including members of the public, partners and supporters.

1.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MAA expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaints handling. The following outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

1.3.1 Executive Management are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.
- Providing adequate support and direction for key staff responsible for handling complaints.
- Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.
- Encouraging all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.
- Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.

1.3.2 Manager responsible for complaints handling must:

- Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices.
- Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.
- Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Assist those making a complaint, if necessary.
- Comply with our complaints handling policy and procedures.
- Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints in accordance with MAA's policies and procedures.
- Ensure recommendations arising from complaints data analysis are reported to management and implemented where appropriate.
- Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.
- Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the complaints handling management system.
- Implement changes arising from individual complaints as directed.

1.3.3 All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Understanding and complying with MAA's complaints handling practices.
- Treating all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Providing assistance to people who wish to make complaints access MAA's complaints process.
- Being alert to complaints and assisting staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this policy document and are defined as follows:

- **Complaint:** An formal expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Complaints handling/ management system:** All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation in the management of complaints.
- **Complainant:** A person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.
- **Feedback:** Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly or suggestions and expressions of interest in the services provided or the complaint handling process.
- **Inquiry:** A request for information or an explanation.
- **Policy:** A statement or 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.
- **Stakeholder or interested party:** A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

2.1 POLICY STATEMENT

This policy provides a framework for MAA's compliance with The ACFID Code of Conduct complaints handling process. MAA recognises the importance and value of documenting and responding to concerns and complaints. MAA are committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards and accountability in every area of our work, specifically in aid and development activities, seeking donations and accountability to stakeholders.

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All complaints and disputes will be addressed promptly and are modelled on the principles of:

- Transparency;
- Fairness;
- Accessibility;
- Responsiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Respect;
- Accountability.

All members and staff at MAA are expected to work cooperatively as a team, to acknowledge any dispute at an early stage, and to resolve any dispute in the most constructive manner possible.

MAA will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website.

Any conflict of interest arising from a dispute will be declared and all steps will be taken to ensure persons working to resolve a dispute are impartial.

Members and staff are expected to maintain strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process.

2.3 RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

Where possible, all complaints will be resolved at first contact with our organisation. Where appropriate, MAA may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

MAA 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.

MAA is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform the complainant as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frame for any action to be taken
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- the possible outcome of their complaint

2.3.1 Complaints Involving Staff

The MAA Board delegates responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members to the CEO.

Where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, this will be dealt with in accordance with the grievance procedure as set out in Section 3 - Complaints Handling Procedure.

Where a member or external agency makes a complaint against a MAA staff member, the CEO or a delegate, such as the Operations Manager will:

- (a) Notify the employee about whom a complaint is being made and the nature of the complaint;
- (b) Investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised;
- (c) Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the external party;
- (d) Take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be handled in accordance with MAA's Human Resource Management procedures and the Employment Contract.

2.3.2 Complaints Involving Board Members or the CEO

Complaints against a member or board member should be referred to the CEO. The CEO, or an approved delegate, will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The CEO or delegate will advise the person about whom a complaint is being made of the notification and the nature of the complaint.

Where the CEO is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to an MAA Board member.

If the matter remains unresolved, the CEO or the notified Board Member will raise the matter at the next Board meeting following notification. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may deal with the matter at this board meeting by determining

appropriate action to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party and the MAA member.

Under the MAA constitution, the Board has powers to suspend or terminate the membership of any member who wilfully 'refuses or neglects to comply' with the provisions of the constitution, or who is 'guilty of conduct prejudicial to the Interests' of MAA. Such action must be taken in accordance with the process described in the constitution, which provide for proper notice and rights of appeal.

2.3.3 MAA External Complaints and Feedback

MAA offers service users, members, stakeholders and the public the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences with MAA. We value this feedback and aim to manage complaints in a prompt, fair transparent and consistent way.

Any person or organisation using MAA services or affected by its operations has the right to complain.

Complaints' procedures and a commitment to consider all complaints are simple and easy to use and are effectively promoted, so that all people using MAA services have the opportunity to make a complaint if they wish to do so.

Service users, stakeholders and members are entitled to be heard and have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

MAA recognises that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant and must be taken seriously.

Resolving complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant is the goal of the complaints policy process.

Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and parties to the complaint will be kept informed of progress of the complaint. MAA procedures will reflect principles of natural justice.

Feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and follow up.

Board Members, Staff, and volunteers are aware of MAA's procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.

MAA takes a proactive approach, through its communications strategy to ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures.

2.4 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

All Board Members, Staff, volunteers and students are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction, including:

- How to make a complaint to MAA;
- Who to complain to;
- How MAA will deal with the complaint – complaints process and timelines;
- Rights to a support person and interpreter;
- How to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

2.4.1 Complaints Initiation Process

Service users, stakeholders and members may make a complaint in writing or verbally, in the following order to:

1. The Staff Member they were dealing with at the time;
2. The supervisor of that worker;
3. The CEO; or
4. The Board of Directors.

If the complaint is about the CEO, or a Board Member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chair of MAA's Board. A special email account has been set up to receive such complaints.

A staff member will look at the complaint within seven (7) days of the complaint being received. They may contact the person for more information.

2.4.2 Complaints Resolution Process

The staff member investigating the complaint will decide how to respond to the complaint and make sure action is taken.

A letter will be sent to the person within fourteen (14) days of the complaint being received explaining what is being done to investigate and resolve their complaint. If the complaint has not been resolved by this stage the person will be asked to formalise their complaint in writing (if this has not already been done).

MAA aims to investigate and resolve all complaints within a further twenty-eight (28) days of receipt of the formalised written complaint. If this time frame cannot be met, the person will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

All complaints must be dealt:

- Seriously;
- Quickly;
- Confidentially; and
- Without preventing the complainant from using MAA's services.

Service users, stakeholder and members have the right to access a support person at all stages of the complaints resolution process. Copies of all complaints and details of actions taken are centrally filed in the Complaints File, held in the CEO's office. This file is confidential. Within six

(6) months of the complaint being resolved, the CEO must review the actions taken to ensure adequate follow up.

2.5 ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

MAA will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the Board of Directors. This will inform any improvements that need to be made to our operational processes and the services provided.

On a regular basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling processes and make improvements as necessary.

Where appropriate, we will consult and take advice from ACFID and /or other relevant regulatory/ enforcement authorities.

2.6 BUILDING A COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESSES THAT ARE CHILD FRIENDLY

Child safe and friendly organisations establish guidelines for listening to children and young people about any concerns or complaints about behaviour towards a child, or disclosure or discovery of abuse. These elements complement the key action areas of MAA's Child Safeguarding guidelines.

2.6.1 Organisational approaches prioritise child safety and a child friendly complaint process

1. Governance and policy: Leaders must create and maintain an organisational culture where the prevention of child abuse is the responsibility of all staff and other stakeholders, and where children and other stakeholders feel confident to safely discuss any child safety concerns and barriers children experience in making complaints are understood and overcome.
2. Equipping staff and volunteers to manage complaints: MAA ensures to equip staff and volunteers to support children and young people to speak up, and respond when they identify concerns.

2.6.2 Complaints systems are visible, accessible and understood by children, young people, families, staff and other stakeholders

MAA staff and field partner's staff should inform children and young people of their right to raise concerns and make complaints and the different ways in which they can do this. Complaints systems must be easy to locate and provide readily understood information.

2.6.3 Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly

MAA staff and other stakeholders who are responsible for receiving complaints from children and young people must be respectful, willing to listen, skilled listeners and able to take action where necessary.

2.6.4 Involve trusted adults and other support people in supporting children and young people to make a complaint

At MAA, we have observed that children and young people say that they would seek the help of a trusted adult or an advocate to speak up, support them and help them navigate a complaints system. It is important for MAA staff to raise awareness amongst adults and peers of the complaints systems available, to build their capacity to support children and young people to make the complaint.

3 REVISION HISTORY

Date of this release: 06 October 2015	Date of next revision: 31 December 2025
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Revision Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked?
1.0	19 September 2012	Policy Written	N
2.0	06 October 2015	Update with new logo and minor enhancements.	N
3.0	17 March 2017	New sections incorporated and further details included	N
4.0	16 August 2019	Further details and new templates added	N
5.0	20 May 2023	Item 2.6 is created, new logo is updated	Y
5.1	5 February 2024	Update version history on main page	Y
5.2	14 November 2024	Reviewed	N

ANNEX 1 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT FORM

Formal Complaint – Case Management Form		
Branch		
Investigating Officer		
General Information		
Name of complainant		
Is the complaint being handled by the appropriate branch?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If no, has the complaint been referred to the appropriate branch?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	No <input type="checkbox"/> (If no, why not?)
Notes		
Complaint Lodgement and Acknowledgement		
Date received		
Complaint lodged	<input type="checkbox"/> In person <input type="checkbox"/> In writing <input type="checkbox"/> Verbally	
Has complaint been registered on the Complaints Register?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> (If not, why?)
Nature of complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> Service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff conduct
	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/procedure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	
Date acknowledged	6/5/2019	
Has complainant been advised of MAA's Complaints Handling Policy?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes		

Investigation		
Proposed timeframe for resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Standard (ie within 30 working days)	<input type="checkbox"/> Complex (ie more than 30 working days)
Has sufficient information/evidence been provided to investigate?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If no, what additional information is required?		
Date complainant notified for additional information		
Investigation strategy (more than one box can be ticked)	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting (s) with complainant	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Review of available material	<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone interview(s) with complainant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Key stages of investigation (e.g. interview date(s))		
Recommendation(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Written/ verbal apology	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/ procedure review	<input type="checkbox"/> Change to service
	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff training	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Decision		
Notification		
Date decision communicated to complainant: (this should be writing)		
Was the complaint justified?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Was the complainant satisfied with the outcome of the complaint?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If no, has complainant been notified of their right to an external review?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the complaint register been updated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes		

ANNEX 2 COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION FORM

Formal Complaint – Investigation Report	
Name of Complainant	
Subject of Complaint	
Investigating Officer	
Date of decision	
Decision	
Details of Complaint	
[summarise the complaint]	
Investigation Process	
[describe what you did to investigate the complaint e.g. what documents were collected, who you spoke to, etc]	
Review of Complaint	
[set out your response to each element of the complaint, giving your reasoning, preferably referencing your reasons by reference to evidence that you collected]	
Decision	

[say whether you uphold, partially uphold, or reject the complaint; if there are several aspects to the complaint, indicate your decision for each aspect but reach an overall decision]

Proposed Resolution

[if you upheld or partially upheld the decision, set out the proposed resolution, e.g. apology, explanation, policy/ procedure review, etc; it will be helpful if you indicate why you think this/ these resolution(s) are appropriate]

ANNEX 3 COMPLAINT FORM

Formal Complaint Form	
Information for complainants	
<p>Before you lodge a formal complaint, ensure that you have contacted the relevant employee directly and attempted to resolve the issuer or concern informally.</p> <p>A complaint should only be lodged if you have been unable to resolve your issue or concern informally. You may be contacted and asked to provide additional information to support your complaint.</p>	
Personal Details	
Title	Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Family name	
Given name	
Contact Details	
Address	
Email address	
Mobile number	
Preferred contact method	Mobile <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/>
Complaint Details	
Have you attempted to resolve the complaint informally?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details (when and with whom)
Have you lodged a complaint about this issue before?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, when
Have you lodged your complaint with any other agency?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, with whom?
Complaint Summary	
When it happened	
Where it happened	

Who was involved
What happened (please provide details)
What would you like to happen to resolve your complaint? (Attach any documentation that supports your complaint)
Acknowledgement
All the information provided above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Signature: _____ Date: _____
Privacy Notice
The personal information provided by you on this form and any associated documents will be used by MAA International (MAA) to assist you with your complaint and not for any other purpose. The information will only be disclosed to persons or agencies outside MAA in accordance with the <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> or as otherwise required or authorized by law. The provision of your information is voluntary. It will be stored securely. You may gain access to and correct your personal information by contacting Compliance Officer, MAA International, GPO Box 395, Bankstown NSW 2200, Tel: 02 8016 9500, Email: compliance@maainternational.org.au
What Happens Next
Once your complaint has been received by MAA, it will be allocated to an investigation officer. The investigation officer will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 7 working days. Complaints will be investigated as promptly as possible. Once the investigation is completed you will be advised in writing of the outcome.