

Complaints Handling Policy

Approved: 20 February 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 *Hope From Above Inc (HFA)* is committed to efficient, effective and ethical programs and services that serve our clients. HFA understands the value of an effective complaints policy and procedure in improving services and uncovering wrongdoing.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to ensure *HFA* handles complaints efficiently, effectively and ethically. This policy provides guidance to the Board, staff and volunteers on responding to complaints

3. Scope

3.1 This Policy applies to complaints made by beneficiaries of *HFA*.

3.2 This policy does not apply to complaints made by Board members, staff and volunteers. More appropriate avenues for these individuals to raise a concern or complaint can be found in *HFA's* other policies and procedures, specifically:

(a) Whistleblowing Policy, or

(b) Refer to the Guidance Manual Ch 13: Key Policies.

4. Complaint handling process

4.1 In summary, *HFA's* complaints handling procedure involves the following steps:

(a) Facilitation of complaints;

(b) Receiving complaints;

(c) Assessing complaints;

(d) Responding to complaints; and

(e) Learning from complaints.

- 4.2 At all times *HFA*, its Board, staff and volunteers should apply this procedure in good faith, prioritising early resolution, accessibility and responsiveness.
- 4.3 When applying this procedure, the CEO and Board should also consider whether there may be legislation or regulations or other *HFA* policies applicable to the particular complaint – for example, complaints involving a failure to protect children.

5. Facilitation of complaints

- 5.1 The Board will ensure that the making of complaints is facilitated within *HFA* by:
 - (a) providing people making complaints with information about *HFA*'s complaint handling process;
 - (b) setting time frames for complaint responses;
 - (c) ensuring no detriment to people making complaints;
 - (d) allowing for anonymous complaints and confidential investigations if appropriate;
 - (e) ensuring information about the complaint procedure is publicly available on *HFA*'s website; and
 - (f) not charging a fee for complaints.
- 5.2 The Board will communicate the complaints procedure to the public and people making complaints through a publicly facing Complaints Handling Procedure document.

6. Receiving complaints

- 6.1 When a complaint is received, *HFA* will:
 - (a) provide the person making a complaint with the Complaint Handling Procedure;
 - (b) acknowledge the complaint;
 - (c) advise of expected timeframes; and
 - (d) explain next steps.
- 6.2 All complaints must be recorded and documented upon receipt.

7. Assessing complaints

- 7.1 Complaints will be assessed after acknowledgement.
- 7.2 The complaint will first be assessed to establish the desired outcome sought by the person making the complaint, and whether the issue/s raised in the complaint are within *HFA's* control.
- 7.3 If the matter is within *HFA's* control, consideration will be given to how the complaint can be managed, with reference to:
 - (a) the seriousness and urgency of the complaint;
 - (b) any identifiable risks to *HFA*, its Board members, staff, volunteers or people accessing programs or services;
 - (c) whether further investigation is required; and
 - (d) what would (or could) be involved in resolving the complaint.
- 7.4 *HFA* will keep the complainant informed throughout this process.

8. Responding to complaints

- 8.1 After a complaint is assessed and/or investigated, *HFA* will determine an outcome and communicate to the person making the complaint:
 - (a) the outcome of the complaint and any action taken;
 - (b) the reason/s for the outcome;
 - (c) the remedy, resolutions or fixes that have been put in place; and
 - (d) options for review of the outcome.

9. Complaints connected to third party programs

- 9.1 *HFA* pursues its charitable purposes in part through collaborating with a third party or third parties to deliver programs overseas.
- 9.2 *HFA* is required by the ACNC External Conduct Standards (**ECS**) to consider and monitor complaints made to, about and by third parties collaborating with *HFA* outside of Australia.

9.3 As part of its ECS risk assessment, the Board must determine what level of oversight it requires in relation to these complaints, with reference to matters including the:

- (a) level of risk associated with the operations;
- (b) relationship with the third party;
- (c) complaint handling procedures within the third party; and
- (d) consequences of a complaint about overseas operations not being acted upon.

9.4 The Board must consider whether it is appropriate to:

- (a) impose complaint handling obligations on third parties through a Memorandum of Understanding or other agreement;
- (b) offer training to third parties on complaint management;
- (c) require third parties to produce a complaint management policy or procedure (or provide one for them to adopt); and/or
- (d) establish a mechanism for any of beneficiaries, employees, volunteers or Board members of a third party to make a complaint directly to *HFA*.

9.5 *HFA* may require a third party to report annually/or a quarterly basis to *HFA* on any complaints received by the third party.

10. Record keeping

10.1 *HFA* will keep records about:

- (a) Complaints received,
- (b) The outcome of the complaint; and
- (c) Outstanding actions to be followed up.

10.2 The Board must review a record of complaints at every Board Meeting.

11. Authorisation

The Board of *Hope From Above Inc. (HFA)*