

Complaints/Critical Incident Handling Procedures

The Complaints/Critical Incident Handling Policy will be implemented using the following procedures:

Receipt of a complaint or incident report

Complaints or reports of incidents can be made in any form: Phone, email, in writing or by personal contact.

In whatever form, the complaint/report should include:

- the name and contact details of the person reporting the complaint/incident;
- specify the nature of the complaint/incident; and
- include all available evidence.

All complaints/reports received will be reviewed as soon as possible after receipt (**if possible within 5 working days**) and a decision made whether there is a valid complaint/incident, whether to refer it to a more appropriate body; and whether it can be resolved through an informal or formal investigation. The National Director will then advise the Chairperson of the relevant National Committee of the complaint and the proposed action.

UnitingWorld will contact the complainant/person making the incident report no later than **10 working days** of receipt to acknowledge the complaint/incident report. UnitingWorld will advise the next steps and the name and contact details of the person managing the complaint/incident report. If it is a complaint against a particular person, that person is defined as the respondent.

However the complaint is received, the complainant may be asked to provide further information.

The Stakeholder Feedback and Grievance Contact Letter (saved here) and a Procedure Flow Chart (included at the end of this section) will be made available to all partners to facilitate the reporting of complaints and critical incidents.

If the person making the complaint/report would be aided by the provision of personal support or professional advice, and a duty of care exists, UnitingWorld will arrange for personal and/or professional support to be provided, using the Church's resources where possible and/or appropriate.

Complaints or incident reports indicating a criminal offence

Complaints or incident reports indicating a criminal offence may have been committed (including child protection related-incidents) must be immediately referred by UnitingWorld and/or its partner, to the responsible statutory authorities.

¹ Refer to the Stakeholder Feedback and Grievance Contact Letter Template and Complaint/Critical Incident Procedure Flow Chart <..\..\..\ADMINISTRATION\4 Agency Templates\Stakeholder Feedback and Grievance Contact Letter Template.docx>

If there is risk to any individual or individuals arising from the complaint/incident report or the process of making a complaint/incident report, UnitingWorld will work to ensure individuals are removed from potential harm and/or those accused of serious offences are removed from the situation, while maintaining presumption of innocence.

All complaints/incident reports must be reported to the Complaints Officer and National Director immediately upon receipt, who will enter it in UnitingWorld's Incident Register.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer (or the person handling the complaint) will establish the facts and gather relevant information, by following some or all of the steps below²:

- appoint an independent investigator;
- plan the investigation;
- gather and review background material and documentary evidence;
- review relevant legislation and guidelines;
- interview the complainant;
- interview the respondent, if possible; and
- interview any witnesses or other relevant people.

Determination, action and response

The person handling the complaint/incident report will consider the complaint/report, accompanying information, the respondent's response, any additional evidence and shall make a determination in the form of a written report. The process should be recorded using UnitingWorld's Complaints and Incidents form. The National Director is responsible for ensuring all complaints/critical incidents received from stakeholders are recorded in the Complaints and Incidents Register, including details of investigations and responses. The National Committees review a summary of this Register at each quarterly meeting. All incidents/complaints recorded in the Register will be kept in a secure location accessible only by the National Director, EA and Complaints Officer. Incidents will be noted in the CRM, by recording details of the incident and follow-up under the complainant's record. If an incident relates to a partner/organisation at an organisation level, the incident/complaints will be recorded in the individual complainant's record and linked to the partner/organisation account.

The determination should include:

- an outline of the facts and a judgment where they are disputed;
- whether or not the complaint is upheld; and
- if the complaint is upheld, what action should be taken.

The action to be taken may include:

- a conciliation process;

² Refer to the ACT Alliance Complaints Handling and Investigation Policy (2016) <http://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-complaints-handling-policy/>

- a mediation process; and/or
- actions addressing the particular issue.

In the event that a complaint relates to a member of staff, Assembly and/or Synod Human Resources procedures including disciplinary measures will apply.

Simpler complaints/reports will be addressed with a response to the Complainant as soon as possible, generally within 5 working days.

Where complaints/reports are more complex, Complainants will receive a response outlining the preliminary outcome of the investigation, where possible, **within 30 days** after acknowledgment of the complaint/report. In exceptional cases the investigation period may take longer. All parties will be informed if the investigation timeframe is extended. The complainant/person making the incident report will not receive full details of the investigation but will be informed of the findings and actions taken.

Once the complaint/incident has been resolved, the status of the complaint/incident will be updated in the Complaints and Incidents Register, including a date of resolution.

Appeals process

If the complainant/person making an incident report is not satisfied with UnitingWorld's response, they may appeal to the next level within UnitingWorld. If a complaint has been handled at management level, the appeal will be directed to the National Committee and, thereafter, the General Secretary of the Assembly.

If, after further investigation and attempts to resolve the issue, the complainant/person making an incident report continues to be dissatisfied with the outcome, UnitingWorld will write to the complainant/person making the report, outlining actions taken and closing the matter.

All complainants will be informed of their right to lodge a complaint concerning UnitingWorld with the following bodies (as appropriate): the Fundraising Institute of Australia (FIA), the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

UnitingWorld is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. As a Code signatory, UnitingWorld is required to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.³

Members of the public can lodge complaints concerning UnitingWorld for breach of the Code through the following contact:

Code of Conduct Management Team, Private Bag 3, Deakin ACT 2600

For more information visit <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/complaints>.

Follow up and learning

³ More information about the ACFID Code of Conduct can be obtained from www.acfid.asn.au

Complaints/critical incidents audit? will be carried out periodically by Management and the Governance and Compliance Committee and will feed into UnitingWorld's strategy and process review. Names of complainants, organisations, witnesses, and subjects of complaints/critical incidents will not be revealed in public reports.

Additional Child Protection Related Info for DFAT Projects

In the event of a child protection related allegation involving any representative of UnitingWorld, DFAT must be notified by the National Director as soon as possible except in the case of partner personnel in non-DFAT funded projects. UnitingWorld is not obliged to disclose allegations and incidences of child exploitation and abuse in non-DFAT funded projects unless DFAT-activities are likely to be impacted, or in cases where UnitingWorld deems that disclosure is in the best interests of the broader aid community.

If UnitingWorld representative is unsure whether an allegation amounts to child exploitation or abuse, rather than drawing their own conclusion they should contact the National Director for confidential advice and further information.

Reports can be made by:

Email: childprotection@dfat.gov.au

Telephone: +61 2 6178 5100

Mail: Child Protection Compliance Section, GPO Box 887 Canberra, ACT 2601 Australia

When notifying DFAT, the initial report should include:

- Date(s) of incident(s)
- Name of organisation(s) involved (including any partner organisations or host organisation for Australian volunteers)
- Alleged offender's details (including name, nationality and occupation)
- Details of the alleged incident(s)
- Whether local law enforcement authorities or Australian Federal Police (AFP) have been informed
- If it is an Australian Aid-funded activity, the name of the activity (if known)
- Details of what the organisation(s) proposes to do
- Any other relevant information

Complaint/Critical Incident Procedure Flow Chart

