

Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association Inc

Complaints Handling Policy

1. Introduction

- (a) The Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association Inc (AAHYA) supports a culture of continuous improvement and recognises that receiving feedback and responding to complaints are important ways for AAHYA to improve performance and be accountable to our stakeholders. AAHYA takes all complaints seriously and is committed to resolving complaints in a fair, timely and respectful manner.
- (b) This Policy sets out AAHYA's procedure for responding to complaints.
- (c) The following people should familiarise themselves with this Policy:
 - (i) all members of AAHYA's Committee of Management (**Committee**), employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants (collectively, **personnel**);
 - (ii) AAHYA's **partners**, which means any organisation that receives AAHYA funding in Australia or overseas to deliver our services or implement development activities;
 - (iii) the people who benefit from our services, including children (**beneficiaries**);
 - (iv) visitors who attend our offices to obtain an understanding of our work but not including any persons in the categories above (**visitors**); and
 - (v) any other individuals who work with AAHYA.

2. Scope

- (a) This Policy applies to complaints related to the standards of service, actions or lack of action by AAHYA and the conduct of our personnel and partners. Anybody affected by our programs, including our beneficiaries, partners, donors and members of the public may make a complaint to AAHYA.
- (b) Complaints by personnel relating to employment matters are handled in accordance with AAHYA's separate human resources policies and this Policy does not apply to employment matters.
- (c) Reports relating to safeguarding incidents are handled in accordance with AAHYA's Safeguarding Policy and this Policy does not apply to those incidents.

3. Guiding Principles

AAHYA aims to address feedback and resolve complaints in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) **Accessibility:** AAHYA aims to ensure its complaints procedure, as set out in this Policy, is accessible for our stakeholders and the communities we work in. This Policy is published on our website. Feedback and complaints can be provided to AAHYA in a variety of ways including in person, by telephone and in writing by post or email. AAHYA's contact details are set out in section 4 below.

- (b) **Confidentiality:** Wherever possible AAHYA maintains the confidentiality of complaints and the identity of complainants. It may be necessary to disclose the fact and substance of a complaint and identifying information about the complainant in order to investigate or make enquiries about a complaint. The complainant's permission will be sought for this.
- (c) **Fairness:** AAHYA strives to investigate and resolve complaints in a fair and impartial manner.
- (d) **Responsiveness:** AAHYA recognises the need to be responsive when handling complaints, to keep complainants informed throughout the process and to resolve complaints in a timely manner.
- (e) **People-focused approach:** AAHYA works with children and people from marginalised groups (for example, refugees). AAHYA strives to provide a supportive and accessible means through which these individuals may make a complaint and to provide referral services to support services where helpful.

4. How to make a complaint or provide feedback

- (a) We are able to receive complaints and feedback in person, by telephone and in writing by post or email. Complaints may be made by an advocate of the complainant.
- (b) Contact details are as follows:

1 Bellona Avenue
Regents Park NSW 2143
Phone: (02) 9738 7460 or 0466 630 314
Email at karimi.aahya@gmail.com
- (c) Feedback may be provided on our [Facebook](#) page.

5. Complaints handling procedures

5.1 Standard procedures

- (a) Complaints that are received verbally will be recorded by AAHYA in writing as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. This record should include (if this information is available):
 - (i) the name and contact information of the complainant;
 - (ii) the date and time the complaint was received;
 - (iii) a brief description of the complaint;
 - (iv) the outcome sought by the complainant; and
 - (v) how the complaint was addressed and the outcome.

This record must be kept in accordance with AAHYA Corporate Governance Policy.

- (b) Other than where the complaint is received directly by the President, the Vice-President or any other member of the Committee, the personnel receiving the complaint must immediately inform their manager.
- (c) The manager or, as applicable, the Committee member who received the complaint will consider the nature of the complaint. In the case of the manager, he or she will determine

whether the complaint needs to be escalated to the President or Vice-President, having regard to the nature of the complaint, and should confer with the President or Vice-President if the manager is uncertain about how to proceed. Serious complaints must be notified by the relevant manager to the President or Vice-President of AAHYA within one business day, including allegations of:

- (i) safeguarding incidents (which will be handled in accordance with AAHYA's Safeguarding Policy);
 - (ii) injury to the complainant or any other person contributed to by the actions of AAHYA or AAHYA's personnel;
 - (iii) financial misconduct by AAHYA or AAHYA's personnel, such as theft or fraud;
 - (iv) a breach of a legal obligation by AAHYA; or
 - (v) any conduct of AAHYA or AAHYA's personnel which is reasonably considered to be likely to constitute a criminal offence.
- (d) A determination will be made by the manager or, where the complaint is received by or referred to a Committee member, that person as to the manner in which the complaint will be dealt with and the relevant personnel will ensure that the complaint is dealt with in that manner. Options and solutions that may resolve the complaint must be explored by the personnel who will resolve the complaint with the complainant. This may also involve that personnel undertaking preliminary enquiries relating to the matters raised in the complaint.
- (e) If an investigation of a serious complaint is deemed necessary this will be undertaken in the manner determined by the President or Vice-President. The complainant will be kept updated on proposed courses of actions and expected timeframes throughout the investigation process, but will not be involved in the investigation except as the subject of the enquiry.

5.2 Communications with the complainant

- (a) Unless it is not appropriate in the circumstances, the personnel tasked with handling a complaint will promptly contact the complainant to confirm that the complaint has been received and provide an approximate timeframe for the complaint to be resolved. Complainants may also be advised as to how the complaint will be dealt with.
- (b) AAHYA personnel tasked with handling a complaint must also:
- (i) not create with the complainant or any other stakeholder false expectations about how a complaint may be resolved or action that may be taken;
 - (ii) at each stage of the complaints handling process, keep the complainant informed about progress and proposed actions. Where possible estimated timeframes should be provided. If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed actions, personnel are, acting reasonably, to consider alternatives;
 - (iii) communicate the outcome of any investigation (if undertaken) to the complainant and the actions proposed to be taken to address any adverse findings of that investigation; and
 - (iv) follow up with the complainant where necessary and monitor the complainant's satisfaction with the handling of the complaint.

5.3 Circumstances where we may not investigate or take other action

- (a) In the case of serious complaints, there may be circumstances AAHYA determines that an investigation or other action is not necessary, such as where:
 - (i) the matter can be resolved quickly and no investigation is necessary; or
 - (ii) the complaint relates to the actions of another organisation or an individual who is unconnected with AAHYA.
- (b) If we decide not to investigate a serious complaint, we will provide the complainant with reasons for that decision. For serious complaints that are more appropriately dealt with by another organisation or authority, AAHYA will assist in referring the complainant to the appropriate organisation or authority.
- (c) In the case of complaints other than serious complaints, AAHYA may determine not to take any action if the complaint is frivolous or vexatious. If AAHYA makes such a determination, it will notify the complainant of that decision.

5.4 Support

Support will be offered to complainants and other stakeholders (including the subject of the complaint if it is an individual) as necessary. Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome of any investigation, this may include medical, social, legal and financial assistance, or referrals to such services.

6. Confidentiality

- (a) Confidentiality is a key principle of AAHYA's complaints handling procedure. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that only those people directly involved in making or investigating a complaint will have access to information about it.
- (b) Anonymity will be provided to complainants where possible if it is requested. When a matter is investigated or initial enquiries are made it may be necessary to disclose the substance of the complaint and identity of the complainant to other AAHYA personnel, external persons involved in the investigation process and, in appropriate circumstances, law enforcement agencies. It may also be necessary to disclose the fact and substance of a complaint to the person who is the subject of that complaint.
- (c) The complainant's consent will be obtained before information that could identify them is disclosed to third parties or the subject of the complaint.
- (d) AAHYA will take reasonable precautions to store any records or files relating to a complaint securely and to permit access only to those personnel that need to access the information.

7. Review of decisions

- (a) If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint (other than a serious complaint), then on request by the complainant the matter will be referred to the President or Vice-President for review.
- (b) In the case of a serious complaint, if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, then on request by the complainant the matter will be referred to the Committee for review.
- (c) The President, Vice-President or Committee, as applicable, will undertake any review in accordance with this clause 7 as they see fit. The complainant will be notified of the outcome of the review.

8. Working with partners

- (a) AAHYA undertakes due diligence before partnering with third parties. Each third party’s approach to complaints handling will be considered as part of our assessment of whether the third party is an appropriate partner, including in assessing that third party’s approach to risk management, transparency and accountability and the adequacy of its practices relating to safeguarding.
- (b) Ongoing monitoring of each of our partners will include consideration of any complaints we receive about that partner.

9. Training and awareness

- (a) This Policy will be used in training and induction programs for our personnel and will be made available on our website.
- (b) AAHYA will provide information to the communities in which we work about how to provide feedback on AAHYA or make a complaint.

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every five years by the President. If the President considers any amendments to this Policy are appropriate, the President will notify the Committee of those proposed amendments, which will be implemented if approved by the Committee.

11. Updates to this Policy

Version	Date approved by the Committee	Summary of changes
Version 1.0	February 2021	Original publication.