

Complaints Procedure

WaterAid Australia

Document control

Document title: WaterAid Australia Complaints Procedure	
Scope: WaterAid Australia	
Version: 3	Author(s): Charlotte Flew
Responsibility: Senior Management Team (SMT)	
Date approved: June 2023	Document status: APPROVED
Effective date: June 2023	Approved by: SMT
Superseded version: 2	Date of next review: June 2025

Version control

Date	Version	Reason for change	Author
2013	1		
July 2020	2	Reviewed and Amended	Alexandra Kidner
Nov 2022	3	Reviewed and amended. Related policies updated. Inclusion of whistleblowing provider, Safecall	Head of Program Operations

Related Policies/Procedures/Guidance Notes

Title	Date	Version
WaterAid Australia Complaints Policy	June 2023	4
WaterAid International Global Code of Conduct	2021	3
WaterAid Global Procedure for malpractice and breaches to the Code of Conduct – Adapted to WaterAid Australia	Feb 2022	5
WaterAid Australia Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy	July 2021	3
WaterAid Global Safeguarding Policy	Dec 2021	3
WaterAid Australia Child Safeguarding Policy	Sep 2022	5
WaterAid Australia Safeguarding Procedures	Dec 2022	4
WaterAid Australia Privacy Policy	July 2020	2

Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This procedure is intended to complement the WaterAid Australia Complaints Policy to ensure complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively.
- 1.2. This procedure also provides guidance to Partners, suppliers, contractors, and other stakeholders who may receive complaints from the public, communities or individuals where we work, regarding our programs, communications, services and staff.
- 1.3. This procedure should be made available to all Partners and other relevant stakeholders we work with in Australia to support ongoing awareness-raising initiatives, such as face-to-face communication and training, around the Complaints Procedure.
- 1.4. This procedure should be read in conjunction with related WaterAid policies, procedures and guidance notes as detailed on the cover page.
- 1.5. This procedure includes how WaterAid Australia manages alleged incidents of Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (SEAH), including the investigation process, documentation and reporting of such allegations. Further details are located in the WaterAid Australia Safeguarding Procedure.

2. Aim of procedure

- 2.1. This procedure aims to provide practical support in implementing WaterAid's Complaint Policy in Australia, so that:
 - WaterAid staff and representatives feel equipped to manage complaints based on their level of responsibility;
 - WaterAid staff and representatives feel equipped to manage external complainants with the highest level of service possible, creating increased satisfaction and enhancing the overall complainant's experience of WaterAid;
 - the right to file a formal complaint is appropriately communicated and well understood amongst Partners, communities where we work and other relevant stakeholders;
 - filing a complaint can be made in a safe, discreet and accessible way through various channels, including an independent whistle-blower hotline (Safecall), in both written and non-written form;
 - complainants are assured that their complaints will be managed in a confidential, responsive and fair manner;
 - the integrity of the investigation procedure is assured; and

- the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people are met through immediate action in cases of serious misconduct.

3. Definitions

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by WaterAid Australia or its staff, volunteers or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our work. It is a criticism that implicitly or explicitly expects a response or is legally required.
- Complaints can be about any of the following issues (not an exhaustive list):
 - Exploitation or abuse of children, vulnerable adults or any other person
 - Misuse of funds or fraud (including terror financing)
 - Misconduct (including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment) or breach of WaterAid's Code of Conduct by an individual involved in the work of WaterAid Australia, including employees, volunteers, and contractors of WaterAid Australia, partner organisations or other stakeholders, or misconduct by an individual unrelated to WaterAid Australia's work.
 - Concern from someone about the quality of program delivery or programming approach
 - Concern from a member of the public or supporter about a particular action, communication, fundraising approach or campaign
 - Concern from a Partner organisation
- A complaint is not:
 - A general query or feedback about WaterAid Australia's work. Feedback is defined as opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
 - A request for information or an explanation.
 - A contractual dispute.
 - A request to amend records e.g. to correct an address, cancel a donation.
 - A request to unsubscribe from a WaterAid Australia 'service' e.g. a newsletter or email.

- A dispute over payment by either party which is a commercial legal matter.
- A complainant is the person or entity who has made a complaint or requested someone else to make a complaint on their behalf. A complainant can be any supporter, partner organisation, community or individual with whom we work or any member of the public whether an individual, company or other entity in Australia or anywhere else in the world.

4. Partners, suppliers and contractors

- 4.1. In the due diligence and capacity assessment process with Partners, WaterAid Australia considers a Partner's complaints mechanism, especially in regard to key safeguarding risks such as Child Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).
- 4.2. Where services are contracted out to third parties, service providers should have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system.
- 4.3. Partners, suppliers and contractors representing WaterAid will be given training on how to respond to general questions and feedback. This Procedure will be followed in the case that a supplier or contractor passes on a complaint to WaterAid Australia.
- 4.4. Partners and suppliers that do not have their own complaints policy fall under the scope of WaterAid's Complaints Policy and this Procedure.
- 4.5. At the start of a new partnership or agreement with a supplier and/or contractor, or during the inception phase of a new project/program with an existing partner, WaterAid Australia will inform stakeholders of the Complaints Policy and this Procedure and the stakeholder's responsibilities related to it. Reference will also be included in the Partnership agreement / contract.
- 4.6. WaterAid Australia works with Partners, suppliers and contractors to ensure awareness of: The Complaints Policy and this Procedure; the various channels to file a formal complaint safely and discreetly; the investigation- and decision-making process; and, documentation of a complaint.
- 4.7. Partners are an integral part in the implementation of the Complaints Policy and this Procedure in communities where they work, and it is the responsibility of Partners to ensure awareness of existing complaints mechanisms in those communities. WaterAid Australia will support with making complaint forms available to Partners to use in communities.
- 4.8. WaterAid Australia is committed to provide support to Partners, contractors and suppliers to ensure all relevant stakeholders are aware of their rights to make formal complaints and the various channels they may use to do so.

- 4.9. WaterAid Australia will discuss complaints mechanisms and any concerns with Partners during regular monitoring visits.
- 4.10. WaterAid Australia is also able to directly receive complaints about Partners, suppliers and contractors and other stakeholders related to our work. Subject to the nature of the complaint as well as considerations around privacy and confidentiality, WaterAid will work with the relevant stakeholder to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

5. Communicating the policy and procedures

- 5.1. The Complaints Policy and this Procedure are communicated to staff as part of their induction and through regular refresher trainings. Awareness of the underlying principles of the complaint mechanism and key accountabilities for each role within the organisation is the focus of these trainings (see Annex B: Roles and responsibilities).
- 5.2. Dissemination of the Complaints Policy and this Procedure, and discussion around underlying principles and purpose, will be undertaken upon inception of new projects with all implementing Partners.
- 5.3. Publicly displayed information provides a confidential complaints handling contact point, mailing address and email address at the registered office of WaterAid Australia, and independent whistleblowing service, Safecall.
- 5.4. Handout material with a summary of the complaints policy and confidentiality arrangements is available upon request from WaterAid Australia.
- 5.5. Appropriate communication material is developed in English to cater for members of the communities where we work. Special attention is given to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to ensure they have the information needed and access to make a formal complaint. Country Program Procedures detail how information on local complaints mechanisms is shared in respective local languages.

6. Making a complaint directly to WaterAid

- 6.1. Complaints can be made verbally in person, by telephone and in writing by post, filling out a complaint form, email, or online via our website.
- 6.2. Complaints may be made by a friend or advocate of the complainant on their behalf.
- 6.3. Complaints can be made through Partners and suppliers who will notify WaterAid Australia counterparts directly.
- 6.4. Complaints made through social media platforms will not be acknowledged as formal complaints unless it is accompanied by a complaint submitted through any of the other channels described below.

6.5. Complaints to WaterAid Australia can be made directly through the following channels:

Website: www.wateraid.org/au using the Contact link on our website

Email: info@wateraid.org.au

Mail: WaterAid Australia, The Commons, 3 Albert Coates Ln,
Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia

Phone: +61 1300 858 022

In person: If the complaint cannot be made by phone, email, or post, it can be made directly to a WaterAid Australia staff member.

6.6. If the complaint is about safeguarding, which includes **safeguarding against harassment, sexual harassment, bullying or cyber bullying, discrimination, exploitation or abuse, safeguarding children, safeguarding vulnerable adults, and health, welfare, safety and security**, the complaint can be made directly to the Safeguarding Focal point in WaterAid Australia, or the Global Safeguarding Team Opportunity Officer in WaterAid Australia:

- WaterAid Australia Safeguarding Focal Persons:
 - Charlotte Flew – charlotte.flew@wateraid.org.au

WaterAid Global Safeguarding Team: Safeguarding@wateraid.org

6.7. If the complaint is about finances and assets, which includes **fraud, bribery, corruption, negligence, money laundering, criminal activity, serious malpractice, data protection and right to privacy**, the complaint can be made directly to the WA Aus CEO and Director of Finance and IT:

- WA Aus CEO and Director of Finance and IT – fraud@wateraid.org.au

6.8. If the complaint is about **data protection** and **right to privacy**, the complaint can be made to the WA Aus Privacy Officer:

- Att: Privacy Officer – info@wateraid.org.au

7. Making a complaint to independent Whistleblowing operator, Safecall

Complaints can be made indirectly to WaterAid to an independent Whistleblowing agency, Safecall. The complainant can identify whether they wish their complaint to be kept anonymous. Complaints can be made by:

- **Phone.** Operators will advise the complainant on the next steps for managing their complaint and will then share this with WaterAid
- **In writing,** through an online form.

Australia:

Phone: 1 800 312 928 (phone lines available 24/7)

<https://www.safecall.co.uk/en/clients/wateraid-australia/>

Cambodia:

Phone: 1 800 209 761

<https://www.safecall.co.uk/en/clients/wateraid-cambodia/>

Papua New Guinea

Phone: 001 803 440 884

<https://www.safecall.co.uk/en/clients/wateraid-papuanewguinea/>

Timor-Leste:

Phone: 001 803 440 884

<https://www.safecall.co.uk/en/clients/wateraid-timorleste/>

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate team will be notified.

8. Complaints Management

8.1. The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below



8.2. WaterAid Australia commits to the below timeframes for each of the key stages of complaints management:

- Acknowledge and conduct initial review of suspected serious incidents within 1 day of receipt.
- Acknowledge complaints within 5 working days.
- Investigate within 14 days of receipt.
- Resolve complaints within 30 days of receipt.
- Notify complainants of appeal process within 5 days of receipt of any appeal request.

8.3. In the event that a complaint cannot be resolved within this timeframe the complainant will be informed about the progress made to date and when they can expect to receive a response.

- 8.4. To enable a thorough investigation, complaints should be made within a reasonable time following the relevant incident. In exceptional circumstances WaterAid Australia may be able to respond to a complaint that is older, although the passage of time may make it harder to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.
- 8.5. If the complaint relates to SEAH or child safeguarding this can be reported at any time, and historic concerns will be investigated.

9. WaterAid Australia receiving a complaint directly

- 9.1. When receiving the complaint, the following will be recorded:
- contact details,
 - specific issues related to the complaint,
 - date complaint was received,
 - any actions requested or desired outcome,
 - any request for the complainant to be de-identified,
 - any immediate actions required to ensure safety and wellbeing of the complainant,
 - any immediate actions required to protect assets, any additional support required or next steps.
- 9.2. Formal complaints made to WaterAid Australia staff face-to-face will be documented as soon as possible using a complaints form (*Annex A: Complaint form*)
- 9.3. **All complaints will be forwarded to the Supporter Services Team** to be documented in the Complaints Log as per the process described in *Guidance Note - Recording complaints information* except for complaints related to 6.6 above (safeguarding) or 6.7 above (financial assets) which have specific processes that will be followed as per WaterAid Australia's Safeguarding **Procedures document and WaterAid Australia's Fraud, Corruption, Money Laundering & Bribery Policy.**
- 9.4. If WaterAid Australia receives a complaint related to another organisation, outside of the WaterAid Federation, this will be forwarded on to them. If WaterAid Australia receives a complaint related to another WaterAid Member, this will be forwarded on to them. It will be agreed with the Member who should acknowledge the complaint, and notify the complainant of next steps.

10. Acknowledge the complaint

- 10.1. WaterAid Australia commits to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days.
- 10.2. If the complaint involves an alleged serious incident WaterAid Australia will acknowledge and conduct an initial review **within 1 day of receipt.**
- 10.3. The nature of the complaint determines which staff member is responsible for acknowledging receipt of the complaint (see Annex B: Roles and responsibilities).

- 10.4. We will respond to the complaint in writing, or in the most appropriate way based on the needs of the complainant.
- 10.5. In the response we will inform the complainant of the following:
- the complaints process
 - the expected timeframes for our actions
 - their likely involvement in the process and
 - the possible or likely outcome of their complaint
- 10.6. We will also ask for:
- clarifications if needed
 - desired outcomes of the complaint, if the complainant has any.
- 10.7. Any complaint received which relates to WaterAid international or another WaterAid member will be forwarded to the respective WaterAid entity for attention, and the complainant will be notified accordingly.

11. Assess and investigate

11.1. Initial review

- 11.1.1. All complaints will be assessed through an initial review by the WaterAid representative first receiving the complaint to determine the seriousness of the complaint, whether an investigation is required and if so, how to escalate the complaint.
- 11.1.2. All complaints will be triaged at the point of receiving the complaint based on the following criteria (*Annex A: Complaints form*):
- urgency,
 - health and safety implications,
 - financial implications,
 - complexity (including if other organizations are involved),
 - impact on the organisation,
 - impact on people (including the complainant),
 - systemic implications,
- 11.1.3. The complaint will then be classified as either:
- not warranting an investigation,
 - warranting an investigation, or
 - serious.
- 11.1.4. The WaterAid staff member receiving the complaint will assess, direct and escalate complaints in accordance with the nature, urgency and /or seriousness of the issues raised.
- 11.1.5. Any allegations of a serious nature will be escalated to a member of WaterAid Australia's Senior Management Team.
- 11.1.6. All complaints that involves alleged incidents of SEAH and or safeguarding of children are automatically considered as serious. WaterAid staff will take immediate action to escalate such complaints to the

Safeguarding Focal Person and/or Global Safeguarding Team to ensure immediate protection of vulnerable people and prompt handling of the complaint. WaterAid Australia will report to DFAT, or the DFAT managing contractor as per contractual agreement, any alleged SEAH incidents related to DFAT-funded immediately, and **within 2 working days**.

11.1.7. Further details of reporting procedures related to breach of Global Code of Conduct are outlined in WaterAid Australia's Safeguarding Procedures, and Procedure for Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Code of Conduct.

11.1.8. If a complaint is not assessed as warranting a full investigation, the complainant will be notified including the reason for closing out the complaint without an investigation. The reason to close out the complaint may be e.g. the complaint is not within the scope of the complaint policy, or the complaint can be considered an inquiry or feedback.

11.2. Investigation process

11.2.1. The nature of the complaint will determine which investigation process will follow, and who will be involved.

- Any formal investigation in regard to **financial assets** will be overseen by the WaterAid Australia Finance team and with support by the Internal Audit team from WaterAid International as required.
- Any formal investigation in regard to **safeguarding** will be overseen by the Global Safeguarding Team and conducted by personnel who have been trained in Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment investigations. .
- Any formal investigation in regard to **program/service quality and/or delivery** will be overseen by the WA Australia Director of Program and Policy.
- Any formal investigation into practices related to fundraising or suppliers for our community- or corporate engagement will be overseen by the WA Australia Director of Corporate and Community Engagement.

11.2.2. Any individuals appointed to conduct an investigation should not be implicated in the complaint in any way (either an independent manager or an appropriate external professional should be appointed).

11.2.3. Investigations will be managed as per the relevant WaterAid policy, such as the local disciplinary policy and in line with the relevant national legislation.

11.2.4. Where a complaint involves allegations of SEAH, WA Australia will assist the survivor with appropriate referrals for support, regardless of whether the implicated person is a WaterAid staff/representative or unrelated to WaterAid. WA Australia supports the needs and wishes of survivors of

SEAH, including their decision whether to report incidents to local law enforcement.

- 11.2.5. Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

12. Determine outcome

- 12.1. The individual/s involved in investigating the complaint will recommend an outcome to the person overseeing the investigation. The person responsible for the oversight may delegate the responsibility to determine and communicate the outcome of the complaint, to the person investigating the complaint.
- 12.2. All relevant stakeholders will be informed of the outcomes of complaints, including the complainant and the organisations / people implicated in the complaint.
- 12.3. Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will be coordinated within WaterAid.
- 12.4. Complainants who have launched a well-founded complaint and who are unsatisfied with WaterAid Australia's response to that complaint have the right to appeal. Appeals can be made to the person delivering the outcome of the initial complaint, or by any other channel as outlined in this procedure.
- 12.5. Any internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.
- 12.6. After the internal appeal, there is no further internal process. However, a complaint can still be filed with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct Committee:

Email: code@acfid.asn.au

Mail: Chair
ACFID Code of Conduct Committee c/- ACFID
Private Bag 3
Deakin
ACT 2600
Australia

13. Close complaint: document and report

- 13.1. All complaints (other than safeguarding (1.6), or finances and assets (1.8)) are documented and maintained by the Supporter Services Team in records to ensure organizational learning and to inform senior management decisions.

- 13.2. All serious complaints are documented and maintained in central records at a WaterAid global level. Safeguarding complaints are documented in a confidential case management system and access is only granted to those on a need-to-know basis.
- 13.3. Complaints related to finance and assets are kept in a register held by WaterAid Australia Organisational Support Services Team.
- 13.4. Survivors of SEAH have the right to be de-identified in all documentation referring to the complaint.
- 13.5. All cases of serious misconduct will be reported to the WaterAid Australia Board and to WaterAid International's central complaints register through the relevant channels.

14. Commitment to learning

- 14.1. All relevant stakeholders should be informed of the outcomes of complaints and the implications for our programs and processes.
- 14.2. We will analyze, report on and learn from all complaints received in order to:
 - learn and improve on the service provided
 - enhance internal processes and/or procedures
 - identify any training or briefing requirements
 - get a complete and holistic view of what complaints we are receiving in order to identify any trends
 - ensure supporter satisfaction and loyalty
- 14.3. Complaints reports will be run on a quarterly and annual basis by the Supporter Services team and will be shared with relevant teams.
- 14.4. Reports based on the Complaints Log will be run quarterly and feed into WaterAid Australia's Senior Management Team (SMT) as part of the standing agenda item on complaints.
- 14.5. WaterAid Australia's SMT will provide inputs as necessary to regular reporting into WaterAid Australia's Finance, Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Committee of the Board.