

ORG – 010 v.6

Speak-Up Policy

Complaints and Whistleblowing

Global - Public

Policy Owner: Business Operations – Chief Operating Officer

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Fred Hollows Foundation (**The Foundation**) welcomes feedback and believes that encouraging a transparent speaking-up culture and environment, being open to feedback and complaints and taking them seriously is an important component of our corporate culture. Feedback enables The Foundation to identify areas for continuous improvement, develop the quality of our work and enhance the trust and confidence that stakeholders have in The Foundation.
- 1.2 This Policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it or how it is made.
- 1.3 This Policy needs to be understood and used by all staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers and Board directors.
- 1.4 This Policy separates complaints into two categories:
 - 1.4.1 General Complaints; and
 - 1.4.2 Whistleblowing Complaints;and sets out how to make both of these complaints.
- 1.5 Anyone has the right to raise a General Complaint, have that complaint addressed in a timely manner and receive an accurate and thoughtful response. Every effort will be made to resolve General Complaints in a respectful and satisfactory manner, where appropriate, keep the complainant informed and keep the complainant's identity confidential.
- 1.6 The Foundation also encourages Personnel to make Whistleblowing Complaints and will support those who do so.
- 1.7 The Foundation is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development's Code of Conduct (**ACFID Code of Conduct**) and is committed to recognising the importance and value of listening and responding to concerns and complaints and ensuring its feedback and complaints handling process is fair, effective, safe, confidential and accessible to stakeholders without prejudice.

2. DEFINITIONS

General Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction about The Foundation's work. General Complaints do not include:

- (a) a general enquiry about The Foundation's work;
- (b) a request for information;
- (c) an initial request to amend donor records;

- (d) a request to unsubscribe or be removed from The Foundation's database; or
- (e) a work-related Grievance.¹

Grievance means an expression of unfair treatment by paid employees regarding their employment or by volunteers regarding work they perform for The Foundation. These issues are dealt with through The Foundation's internal procedure, which employees and volunteers are able to access on The Foundation's intranet.

Personnel means any person who carries out work in any capacity for the benefit of The Foundation or its related bodies corporate, which includes employees, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, partners, suppliers, work experience students and volunteers and any other person who formally acts on The Foundation's behalf.

Whistleblower means an individual who can make a Whistleblowing Complaint, which includes the following:

- (a) an officer of The Foundation;
- (b) an employee of The Foundation;
- (c) an individual who supplies goods or services to The Foundation;
- (d) an employee of an individual who supplies goods or services to The Foundation; or
- (e) a relative, dependant or spouse of any person that meets any of the above categories of persons.

Whistleblowing Complaint means a complaint which relates to misconduct or any improper state of affairs or circumstances at The Foundation as set out in section 6 of this Policy. Whistleblowing Complaints do not include:

- (a) a general enquiry about The Foundation's work;
- (b) a request for information;
- (c) an initial request to amend donor records;
- (d) a request to unsubscribe or be removed from The Foundation's database; or
- (e) a work-related Grievance.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 The guiding principles of this Policy are as follows.

3.1.1 We recognise the importance and value of listening and responding to all concerns and complaints.

3.1.2 The complaints handling process is effective, safe, responsive, fair, confidential (subject to The Foundation's compliance with other legal obligations) and accessible to all stakeholders including the most vulnerable. It considers minority and disadvantaged stakeholders

¹ This Policy is not intended to deal with complaints that relate to a work-related Grievance. While the Foundation encourages and supports a speak-up culture and the Guiding Principles set out in this Policy continue to apply, The Foundation has a separate internal procedure that specifically supports complaints of this nature for employees.

irrespective of their gender, status, background, location, whether in Australia or in other countries where we work, and without prejudice to their future participation.

3.1.3 We encourage Whistleblowing Complaints and protect Whistleblowers from detriment.

3.1.4 We will accept complaints relating to any Personnel, which extends to our partners.

3.1.5 We review and analyse complaint information to ensure continuous improvement.

4. COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS POLICY

4.1 The Foundation is committed to the following:

4.1.1 **Visibility:** Information about The Foundation's complaints processes will be clear and well publicised to supporters, rights holders participating in programs, and other stakeholders.

4.1.2 **Accessibility:** The Foundation's complaints handling processes will be easily accessible to all stakeholders and be publicised on The Foundation's website and intranet. There will be readily accessible information about the process of making and resolving complaints with The Foundation in a range of formats so no complainants who have acted reasonably are disadvantaged. Where literacy is a constraint we will orally invite expressions of concern and complaint on a regular basis. We will take care to give this invitation in a way that is culturally appropriate recognising that in some cultures, people require greater encouragement to make a complaint. We will aim to take special care in relation to complaints from vulnerable populations including children and marginalised groups. The Foundation also aims to ensure that complainants are afforded the flexibility to call, write or e-mail complaints and/or to raise concerns in person both in Australia and in the other countries in which we work (complaints can also be made through our partners outside Australia).

4.1.3 **Responsiveness:** The Foundation aims to take all complaints seriously and handle them both appropriately and as quickly as practicable. All complainants will be treated courteously and respectfully and The Foundation will keep complainants updated on the progress of their complaint through the complaints handling process, where appropriate.

4.1.4 **Objectivity:** The Foundation will ensure that all complaints are addressed in a fair, equitable, objective and unbiased manner throughout the complaints handling process. When brought to the attention of The Foundation, issues of conflict of interest will be appropriately managed to ensure objectivity.

4.1.5 **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality relating to the complaint will be safeguarded so far as reasonably practicable. On occasion, it may be necessary for complaint information to be used and disclosed for the purposes of investigating, reporting or continuous improvement. In that case The Foundation will use all reasonable efforts to de-identify information not required for the purpose of the disclosure.

4.1.6 **Stakeholder-focused approach:** The Foundation has a strong stakeholder-focused approach and actively welcomes feedback including complaints and is committed to actively resolve all complaints.

4.1.7 **Accountability:** Accountability for handling complaints and reporting on complaints-related actions and decisions of The Foundation with respect to complaints handling will be clearly established. All complaints will be recorded before action is taken. Complaints will be addressed at a local level as much as possible using the agreed procedure and escalated to management if they are of a serious nature.

- 4.1.8 **Continuous improvement:** The Foundation is committed to the continuous improvement of the complaints handling process and the quality of The Foundation's work. The commitment is practically supported by: the collection and classification of complaint trends; analysis and reporting of complaints trends; monitoring of complaints handling processes; and auditing / management reviews.
- 4.1.9 **Organisational commitment:** The Foundation will ensure that appropriate resources and expertise are provided to handle complaints. Staff will be briefed on the nature and purpose of this Policy and The Foundation will ensure that senior managers and other recipients of complaints are adequately able to receive and handle them. Complaints will be handled in accordance with The Foundation's policies and procedures, with Australian laws and regulations and with local law as applicable.
- 4.2 The Foundation's handling of complaints will meet the following minimum standards:
- 4.2.1 All complainants will be treated respectfully, whether it is felt the complaint is justified or not.
- 4.2.2 All complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible, ideally within five working days by the recipient.
- 4.2.3 All complainants will receive a response to their complaint giving the outcome (subject to legal and regulatory requirements or guidance including the ACFID Code of Conduct) as soon as possible and, as a standard rule, at least within thirty working days from receipt.
- 4.2.4 If the matter is more complex and this timeframe proves impossible, the complainant will be notified of the likely timeframe for resolution.
- 4.2.5 Complaints will be appropriately recorded by The Foundation.
- 4.2.6 The Foundation is committed to ensuring this Policy is accessible via The Foundation's website.
- 4.2.7 The Foundation will work with overseas country offices, partners and suppliers, where necessary, to ensure awareness of the Policy, including their role in handling complaints and raising concerns with The Foundation about any of our programs and / or behaviours of country program or country office staff.
- 4.2.8 A complainant will be made aware of the ability to make a complaint regarding an alleged breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee (see section 5.2.3 below).

5. GENERAL COMPLAINTS

5.1 How to make a General Complaint

- 5.1.1 The Foundation encourages all stakeholders to set out any General Complaints to The Foundation in the first instance so that we may have an opportunity to address any concerns directly. As contact details change from time to time, we set out our contact details in the Complaints section of our website at <https://www.hollows.org/au/Complaints>
- 5.1.2 If you would like to speak with someone about making a General Complaint, or how to escalate a General Complaint, you can also call us on 1800 352 352 from within Australia or +61 2 8741 1900 from outside Australia.

5.2 What The Foundation will do when a General Complaint is received

- 5.2.1 Upon receipt of a General Complaint, The Foundation will address the complaint in a way The Foundation deems appropriate having regard to the terms of this Policy, the ACFID Code of Conduct, and any relevant legislation.
- 5.2.2 If The Foundation does not resolve a General Complaint to the individual's satisfaction, escalation is available to one of the following national industry bodies at no cost.
- 5.2.3 The Foundation is a signatory organisation under the ACFID [Code of Conduct](#). Unresolved General Complaints against The Foundation can be made to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee. Contact details are available on our website (<https://www.hollows.org/au/Complaints>) or ACFID's own website <https://acfid.asn.au/content/Complaints>.
- 5.2.4 If the unresolved General Complaint relates to marketing or fundraising it can be escalated to The Fundraising Institute of Australia. Contact details are available on our website above or FIA's own website <https://fia.org.au/fiacode/Complaints/>.

6. WHISTLEBLOWING COMPLAINTS AND PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWER

- 6.1 The Foundation encourages Whistleblowers to speak-up and will support those who do so. Indeed all Whistleblowers who are aware of possible wrongdoing that would justify a Whistleblowing Complaint have a responsibility to disclose that information.
- 6.2 The types of complaints that can be made as Whistleblowing Complaints are complaints where the Whistleblower has objectively reasonable grounds to suspect:
- 6.2.1 misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances in relation to The Foundation;
- 6.2.2 a contravention by The Foundation of *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth), and any other relevant legislation that provides for Whistleblower protection, or their associated Regulations;
- 6.2.3 that an offence against any other law of the Commonwealth bearing a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more has occurred;
- 6.2.4 conduct which represents a danger to the public or the financial system; or
- 6.2.5 any other eligible conduct proscribed by relevant Regulations.

6.3 How to make a Whistleblowing Complaint

- 6.3.1 Whistleblowing Complaints can be made by a Whistleblower to any of the following individuals:
- (a) Whistleblower Protection Officer;
 - (b) Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, a Divisional Director or Internal Auditor; or
 - (c) any other officer or senior manager employed by The Foundation;
- these individuals have an obligation to listen to the Whistleblowing Complaint and comply with this Policy and any related procedures.
- 6.3.2 To make a Whistleblowing complaint, The Foundation encourages Whistleblowers to:
- (a) send an email to the Whistleblower Protection Officer at speak-up@hollows.org;
 - (b) call +61 2 8741 1900 and ask to speak with the Whistleblower Protection Officer; or
 - (c) speak with any of the individuals listed in paragraph 6.3.1.

6.3.3 The Foundation will accept complaints which do not comply with the above requirements. These complaints can be lodged as General Complaints in accordance with paragraph 5 above.

6.4 What The Foundation will do when a Whistleblowing Complaint is received

6.4.1 Upon receipt of a Whistleblowing Complaint, The Foundation will address the complaint in a way The Foundation deems appropriate having regard to the terms of this Policy, the ACFID Code of Conduct, and any relevant legislation.

6.4.2 Provided the complaint meets the above requirements of a Whistleblowing Complaint, the following safeguards will be in place to ensure protection is afforded to all Whistleblowers in accordance with the requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

- (a) **Protection from detriment:** The Foundation recognises that the decision to report a suspicion can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those being reported. The Foundation will take all practical steps to protect those who raise a Whistleblowing Complaint on objectively reasonable grounds. The Foundation will not tolerate detrimental conduct against a Whistleblower (including dismissal from position, injury, adjusting job duties to impact the Whistleblower negatively, discrimination, harassment or intimidation, psychological harm, as well as damage to their property, reputation or financial position).
- (b) **Investigation:** The Foundation will assess all concerns raised by Whistleblowers and instigate a fair and impartial investigation as appropriate.
- (c) **Confidentiality:** The Foundation will protect an individual's identity when he or she raises an issue and does not want their name to be disclosed. However, it should be understood that in some cases it might not be possible for an investigation to progress if the existence of the complaint cannot be disclosed and a statement by the individual cannot be provided as evidence.
- (d) **Untrue or unproven allegations:** If a Whistleblowing Complaint is made on objectively reasonable grounds but is not confirmed by an investigation, The Foundation will not take any adverse action against the complainant. However, individuals should not make malicious or vexatious allegations aimed at damaging the character of any person.

6.4.3 The Foundation shall also ensure that any individual mentioned in a Whistleblowing Complaint is treated fairly and in accordance with the principles and processes of natural justice.

6.4.4 Where this Policy is contrary to any obligation under any legislation applicable to The Foundation, The Foundation will comply with those legislative obligations.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOUNTABILITIES

7.1 Board

7.1.1 The Foundation's Speak-Up Policy needs to be transparent and applied consistently. In very serious cases, a complaint may require The Foundation's Board to investigate and provide a response.

7.1.2 The Governance and Nominations Committee of The Foundation's Board has an important role to play in overseeing the number and nature of complaints received by The Foundation and ensuring that they have been handled satisfactorily, that appropriate corrective action has been implemented and that trends are identified and addressed.

7.1.3 The Company Secretary will endorse a record of complaints made against The Foundation, including any supporting analysis, for submission to the Governance and Nominations Committee at least annually.

7.2 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

7.2.1 The CEO is responsible for ensuring this Policy is upheld and will inform the Board of any concerns relating to complaints, dispute resolution and whistleblowing that may present risk to The Foundation, its Personnel, beneficiaries, partners, reputation, operations or other activities.

7.2.2 The CEO will ensure progress in relation to complaints and whistleblowing across The Foundation is included in standard reporting to The Board.

7.2.3 The CEO will hold relevant Divisional Directors accountable to this Policy.

7.3 Divisional Directors

7.3.1 The Chief Operating Officer will promote the existence of this Policy to all Personnel.

7.3.2 Divisional Directors will ensure Foundation and Divisional procedures, practices, plans and operations align with this Policy and that all relevant Personnel are aware of, and understand, this Policy and their responsibilities under it.

7.3.3 Divisions are encouraged to put in place procedures to implement the principles set out in this Policy; including for specific countries. However, this Policy will prevail to the extent of any ambiguity or inconsistency between this Policy and those procedures.

7.3.4 Divisional Directors are responsible for monitoring and responding to any complaint, dispute resolution or Whistleblowing risk or concerns arising within The Foundation's business activities that are brought to their attention. The Divisional Director will include risks and incidents on the Divisional risk register and seek the advice of the Policy Owner on issues of contention.

7.4 Policy Owner

7.4.1 The Policy Owner is responsible to ensure The Foundation's Speak-Up Policy complies with The Foundation's obligations and contemporary practice and will update this Policy as required.

7.4.2 The Policy Owner will be responsible for addressing any issues arising in relation to this Policy and will be or arrange a point of contact for all Personnel for any issue of contention.

7.4.3 The Policy Owner will assist the CEO prepare the reporting set out in 7.2.2.

7.4.4 The Policy Owner will inform the CEO of any key risk to The Foundation regarding complaints, or whistleblowing and will record risks and incidents on the organisational risk register.

7.5 Managers (Country and People Managers)

7.5.1 Managers will demonstrate a commitment to a speak-up culture and model transparent complaint management practices.

7.5.2 Managers are to communicate this Policy and all related procedures to Personnel, where appropriate, including ensuring that complaint management and the ability speak-up on matters not consistent with The Foundation's values is regularly a standard agenda item at team meetings.

7.5.3 Managers will engage with their teams in an open, honest and meaningful way to ensure they understand what is expected of them.

7.5.4 Managers will constructively participate in the resolution of complaints where necessary and appropriate.

7.6 All Personnel

All Personnel will adhere to the principles and commitments under this Policy and any related procedures and will take all reasonable care to ensure that their actions or omissions are not in breach of this Policy nor directly or indirectly encourage others to breach this Policy.

7.7 All associated stakeholders

All associated stakeholders operating with or on behalf of The Foundation are responsible to understand and abide by the principles and relevant commitments under this Policy and to advise their primary contact point within The Foundation promptly of any issues that may arise.

8. MONITORING

- 8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years and the Policy Owner is responsible for this review.
- 8.2 The Business Operations Division has oversight for all Governance and Operational Policy and will ensure the Policy is listed on the Policy Register and provide support to the Policy Owner to ensure monitoring and reporting obligations are met.