



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL IMAMS COUNCIL (ANIC)

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) is committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards in every area of our work and to a process of continuous improvement but recognise that complaints, grievances and disputes may occur as within any organisation.

ANIC views complaints as opportunities of continuous improvement and to ensure all associates of ANIC are dealt with fairly.

ANIC also recognises that external bodies may need avenues to raise complaints with ANIC.

Therefore, ANIC values and take seriously any received feedback or complaints and makes a commitment to handle, respond and seek a fair resolution of all complaints in an efficient and equitable manner.

This policy is intended to ensure that ANIC handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To streamline the complaints handling procedure.
- To ensure that all the relevant people at ANIC know what to do if a complaint is received
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To ensure transparent and fair procedures are in place.
- To ensure that ANIC responds to complaints in an impartial and timely manner
- To commit to keeping strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process
- To commit to the continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services

1.2 POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), members, contractors, partners, and Executive committee members, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about ANIC, regarding members, services, staff, or the complaint handling process.

This policy covers complaints made by members of the community and all relevant stakeholders affected by our programs including members of the public, partners and supporters.



1.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ANIC expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaints handling. The following outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

1.3.1 ANIC Executive Committee are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.
- Providing adequate support and direction for key staff responsible for handling complaints.
- Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.
- Encouraging all members to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.
- Support recommendations for service, members, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.

1.3.2 Manager responsible for complaints handling must:

- Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices.
- Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.
- Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Assist those making a complaint, if necessary.
- Comply with our complaints handling policy and procedures.
- Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints in accordance with ANIC's policies and procedures.
- Ensure recommendations arising from complaints data analysis are reported to management and implemented where appropriate.
- Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.
- Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the complaints handling management system.
- Implement changes arising from individual complaints as directed.

1.3.3 All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Understanding and complying with ANIC's complaints handling practices.
- Treating all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Providing assistance to people who wish to make complaints access ANIC's complaints process.
- Being alert to complaints and assisting staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this policy document and are defined as follows:



- **Complaint:** An formal expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Complaints handling/ management system:** All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation in the management of complaints.
- **Complainant:** A person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.
- **Feedback:** Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly or suggestions and expressions of interest in the services provided or the complaint handling process.
- **Inquiry:** A request for information or an explanation.
- **Policy:** A statement or instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.
- **Procedure:** A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.
- **Stakeholder or interested party:** A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.



2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

2.1 POLICY STATEMENT

ANIC recognises the importance and value of documenting and responding to concerns and complaints. ANIC are committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards and accountability in every area of our work.

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All complaints and disputes will be addressed promptly and are modelled on the principles of:

- Transparency;
- Fairness;
- Accessibility;
- Responsiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Respect;
- Accountability.

All members and staff at ANIC are expected to work cooperatively as a team, to acknowledge any dispute at an early stage, and to resolve any dispute in the most constructive manner possible.

ANIC will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website.

Any conflict of interest arising from a dispute will be declared and all steps will be taken to ensure persons working to resolve a dispute are impartial.

Members and staff are expected to maintain strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process.

2.3 RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

Where possible, all complaints will be resolved at first contact with our organisation. Where appropriate, ANIC may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

ANIC will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

ANIC is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform the complainant as soon as possible, of the following:



- the complaints process
- the expected time frame for any action to be taken
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- the possible outcome of their complaint

2.3.1 Complaints Involving Staff

The ANIC Executive Committee delegates responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members to the President.

Where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, this will be dealt with in accordance with the grievance procedure as set out in Section 3 - Complaints Handling Procedure.

Where a member or external agency makes a complaint against an ANIC member, the President or a delegate, such as the Complaints Manager will:

- (a) Notify the member about whom a complaint is being made and the nature of the complaint;
- (b) Investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised;
- (c) Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the external party;
- (d) Take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a member arising from a complaint will be handled in accordance with ANIC's Human Resource Management procedures and the Membership Contract.

2.3.2 Complaints Involving Executive Committee members or the President

Complaints against a member or an Executive Committee member should be referred to the President. The President, or an approved delegate, will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The President or delegate will advise the person about whom a complaint is being made of the notification and the nature of the complaint.

Where the President is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to the ANIC Executive Committee.

If the matter remains unresolved, the President or the notified Executive Committee Member will raise the matter at the next Board meeting following notification. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may deal with the matter at this board meeting by determining appropriate action to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party and the ANIC member.

Under the ANIC constitution, the Executive Committee has powers to suspend or terminate the membership of any member who wilfully 'refuses or neglects to comply' with the provisions of the constitution, or who is 'guilty of conduct prejudicial to the Interests' of ANIC. Such action must be taken



in accordance with the process described in the constitution, which provide for proper notice and rights of appeal.

2.3.3 ANIC External Complaints and Feedback

ANIC offers service users, members, stakeholders and the public the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences with ANIC. We value this feedback and aim to manage complaints in a prompt, fair transparent and consistent way.

Any person or organisation using ANIC services or affected by its operations has the right to complain.

Complaints' procedures and a commitment to consider all complaints are simple and easy to use and are effectively promoted, so that all people using ANIC services have the opportunity to make a complaint if they wish to do so.

Partners, stakeholders and members of the public are entitled to be heard and have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

ANIC recognises that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant and must be taken seriously.

Resolving complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant is the goal of the complaints policy process.

Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and parties to the complaint will be kept informed of progress of the complaint. ANIC procedures will reflect principles of natural justice.

Feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and follow up.

ANIC members, staff, and volunteers are aware of ANIC's procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.

ANIC takes a proactive approach, through its communications strategy to ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures.

2.4 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

All ANIC members, staff and volunteers are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction, including:

- How to make a complaint to ANIC;
- Who to complain to;
- How ANIC will deal with the complaint – complaints process and timelines;
- Rights to a support person and interpreter;
- How to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.



2.4.1 Complaints Initiation Process

Service users, stakeholders and members may make a complaint in writing or verbally, in the following order to:

1. The Staff Member they were dealing with at the time;
2. The supervisor of that worker;
3. The President; or
4. The Executive Committee.

If the complaint is about the President, or an Executive Committee Member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chair of ANIC's Board. A special email account has been set up to receive such complaints.

The Complaints Manager will look at the complaint within seven (7) days of the complaint being received. They may contact the person for more information.

2.4.2 Complaints Resolution Process

The staff member investigating the complaint will decide how to respond to the complaint and make sure action is taken.

An email will be sent to the person within fourteen (14) days of the complaint being received explaining what is being done to investigate and resolve their complaint. If the complaint has not been resolved by this stage the person will be asked to formalise their complaint in writing (if this has not already been done).

ANIC aims to investigate and resolve all complaints within a further twenty-eight (28) days of receipt of the formalised written complaint. If this time frame cannot be met, the person will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

All complaints must be dealt:

- Seriously;
- Quickly;
- Confidentially; and
- Without preventing the complainant from using ANIC's services.

Service users, stakeholder and members have the right to access a support person at all stages of the complaints resolution process. Copies of all complaints and details of actions taken are centrally filed in the Complaints File, held in the President's office. This file is confidential. Within six (6) months of the complaint being resolved, the President must review the actions taken to ensure adequate follow up.



2.5 ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

ANIC will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the Executive Committee. This will inform any improvements that need to be made to our operational processes and the services provided.

On a regular basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling processes and make improvements as necessary.

Where appropriate, we will consult and take advice from other relevant regulatory/ enforcement authorities.



3 REVISION HISTORY

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Date of this release: 01 June 2020 | Date of next revision: 01 June 2020 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

| Revision Number | Revision Date | Summary of Changes | Changes Marked? |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1.0 | 27 March 2020 | Policy Written | N |



ANNEX 1 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT FORM

| Formal Complaint – Case Management Form | | |
|--|--|--|
| Branch | | |
| Investigating Officer | | |
| General Information | | |
| Name of complainant | | |
| Is the complaint being handled by the appropriate branch? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If no, has the complaint been referred to the appropriate branch? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Date: | No <input type="checkbox"/> (If no, why not?) |
| Notes | | |
| Complaint Lodgement and Acknowledgement | | |
| Date received | | |
| Complaint lodged | <input type="checkbox"/> In person <input type="checkbox"/> In writing <input type="checkbox"/> Verbally | |
| Has complaint been registered on the Complaints Register? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> (If not, why?) |
| Nature of complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> Service delivery | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff conduct |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative decision | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/procedure |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) | |
| Date acknowledged | 6/5/2019 | |
| Has complainant been advised of ANIC's Complaints Handling Policy? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Notes | | |



| Investigation | | |
|--|--|--|
| Proposed timeframe for resolution | <input type="checkbox"/> Standard (ie within 30 working days) | <input type="checkbox"/> Complex (ie more than 30 working days) |
| Has sufficient information/ evidence been provided to investigate? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If no, what additional information is required? | | |
| Date complainant notified for additional information | | |
| Investigation strategy (more than one box can be ticked) | <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting (s) with complainant | <input type="checkbox"/> Internal review |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Review of available material | <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone interview(s) with complainant | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| Key stages of investigation (e.g. interview date(s)) | | |
| Recommendation(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Written/ verbal apology | <input type="checkbox"/> Explanation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/ procedure review | <input type="checkbox"/> Change to service |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff training | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| Decision | | |
| Notification | | |
| Date decision communicated to complainant: (this should be writing) | | |
| Was the complaint justified? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Was the complainant satisfied with the outcome of the complaint? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If no, has complainant been notified of their right to an external review? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has the complaint register been updated? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Notes | | |



ANNEX 2 COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION FORM

| Formal Complaint – Investigation Report | |
|--|--|
| Name of Complainant | |
| Subject of Complaint | |
| Investigating Officer | |
| Date of decision | |
| Decision | |
| Details of Complaint | |
| [summarise the complaint] | |
| Investigation Process | |
| [describe what you did to investigate the complaint e.g. what documents were collected, who you spoke to, etc] | |
| Review of Complaint | |
| [set out your response to each element of the complaint, giving your reasoning, preferably referencing your reasons by reference to evidence that you collected] | |
| Decision | |



[say whether you uphold, partially uphold, or reject the complaint; if there are several aspects to the complaint, indicate your decision for each aspect but reach an overall decision]

Proposed Resolution

[if you upheld or partially upheld the decision, set out the proposed resolution, e.g. apology, explanation, policy/ procedure review, etc; it will be helpful if you indicate why you think this/ these resolution(s) are appropriate]