

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS HANDLING POLICY



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1. Introduction

Plan International Australia (PIA) is committed to actively encouraging feedback and responding to complaints and compliments in an effective and clearly defined manner. As part of increasing its accountability to stakeholders, PIA will ensure that its Complaints and Compliment handling process is accessible and responsive to all stakeholders. In responding to feedback that is within its areas of responsibility, PIA will be objective and ensure confidentiality of personal details. Plan will monitor and analyse complaints regularly to learn from common trends and implement improvements accordingly.

Details of this Policy and the process for submission will be clearly visible on the Plan website.

2. Scope

This scope of this Policy is to support the submission, response and action of compliments, complaints or feedback from constituents that include donors, supporters, the general public, young people and suppliers etc.

However, this policy does not include employment related complaints. Plan Australia employees, volunteers, contractors, clients and consultants can lodge a complaint under the Grievance Policy and Whistle Blowing Policies. This policy and its documented Procedure will also be used to support responses for compliments, complaints or feedback provided to other external oversight bodies that Plan is a signatory to. This policy does also not include complaints made in relation to a safeguarding incident, which is addressed in PIA's Safeguarding Policy.

Complaints against a signatory agency to the ACFID Code (e.g. other NGOs) are handled by ACFID under Section E3 of the Code of Conduct and are related to conduct that breaches the Code.

3. Purpose

PIA recognises the value of feedback and acknowledges that it is an important tool in responding to and monitoring stakeholder expectations. Plan expects that its many constituents (donors, volunteers, young people, suppliers etc) in Australia will hold us accountable for the delivery of a high quality of service, engagement and positive impact on children's lives.

In addition, PIA expects that the participants and those living in the communities where projects are implemented are able to hold us accountable for the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of our work. Country Offices (COs) and Program Units (PUs) as well as external partners are directly responsible for responding to and recording complaints and compliments by project stakeholders, sponsored children and their families, community members and local partners. Plan International has a child-friendly feedback and complaints guide and toolkit which country offices are required to contextualise and apply in the delivery of their programs

(https://planinternational.sharepoint.com/teams/drm/team003/DRM%20Team%20Site%20Library/GLO-Feedback_Complaints_Mechanisms_Guidance_Toolkit-Final-IO-Eng-Jul19.pdf)

This Policy has been designed to comply with the Australian Standard Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations (ISO 10002:2018).

4. Guiding Principles

To ensure complaints and compliments are effectively managed PIA has adopted a set of guiding principles:

1. **Visibility** – where and how to make a complaint, compliment or provide other feedback will be publicised on the Plan website and across other key online channels. It may also be included in other communications material where appropriate and used for verbal referral for all staff.
2. **Accessibility** – the complaints and compliment handling process will be readily available to all stakeholders in Australia. To facilitate feedback from the field, Plan will work with COs and PUs to consult with local communities and possibly use local language feedback forms, suggestion boxes and community meetings.
3. **Responsiveness** – Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, Plan will aim to acknowledge email and phone complaints within 48 business hours and complaints made by letter within 3 business days. A response to a complaint will be provided within 10 business days or 30 business days if it needs referring to the field. The complainant will be kept informed as to the progress of their complaint every 5 business days if it exceeds these timelines.
4. **Objectivity** – each complaint will be actioned in an open, fair and unbiased manner. An Appeals process (see below) is available if the complainant is not satisfied with the response. This includes referral to ACFID in extreme circumstances.
5. **Charges** – it is free to make a complaint or submit a compliment.
6. **Confidentiality** – all parties involved in the process are expected to maintain confidentiality. Those responsible for handling the complaint or conducting the investigation may discuss it with those individuals who have a need to know or who are needed to supply background information or advice. Plan collects, manages, uses and discloses personal information under the requirements of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

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7. Customer focused approach – Plan will enable all stakeholders to be heard and is committed to resolving all complaints.

8. Support to Complainants - Plan is committed to providing assistance or referrals to medical, social, legal or financial support as appropriate by complainants.

9. Accountability – Plan will review trends and monitor data in regard to complaints and compliments on a monthly basis. Plan will ensure that critical management data in regard to complaints and compliments is escalated to the Senior Management and Board level to ensure leaders have oversight of the performance of the organisation.

10. Continual improvement – there will be continual review and improvement of the complaints and compliments handling process. The Policy, Public Statement, Procedures and Guidance will be reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary.

5. The Process for Submission

Complaints should be taken seriously, and investigated in an honest and fair manner, with details of all complaints and compliments logged in a register that is overseen by the Complaints Officer (in this case, the Associate Director of Marketing & Communications).

Complaints may be submitted through an online form available at <https://www.plan.org.au/privacy-policy/feedback-and-complaints/> that will feed directly into the register, however complaints can also be lodged in writing, via email or phone. When staff or third party contractors verbally receive complaints, specifically, they may also be reasonably be lodged in the register, in line with Plan Australia Complaint Handling Guidelines & DCC Procedures.

Regardless of the channel, all submissions should be logged in the “Register.” The register will be maintained as a log for all complaints, compliments and formally lodged feedback (alongside existing supporter engagement practices in the CRM) and will act as a central depository for the triaging of the submission, whom it was allocated to, the response and the eventual outcome. A top line report of the register will be tabled quarterly with the internal Risk Assurance Commitment, Executive Management and the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee for observation.

If a complaint can’t be resolved immediately, we aim to acknowledge phone and email complaints within two business days, and complaints made by letter within five business days. If someone have contacted us via a social media channel, we aim to respond within one business day to commence the formal process, in line with the aforementioned Register.

A response to the complaint will then be communicated to the submitting party within 10 business days, or 30 business days if it needs to be referred to a country where we work. If this deadline cannot be met, all submitters will be contacted and provide an update. Submitters should be given details of a contact person that they can communicate with at any time.

When a complaint or compliment process is finalised and all parties are amenable to the outcome, this should be recorded in the Register. The Register should be reviewed on a regular basis by the Officer, and formerly as part of Executive reporting.

6. What is a valid compliment or complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with Plan’s conduct, lack of conduct or a standard of

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service, where a response is usually expected. The complaint must be connected to Plan Australia's areas of responsibility for it to be actioned. A compliment is defined as positive feedback about Plan's conduct or service

Plan cannot, will not accept complaints that are deemed frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance. If a complaint is not progressed, submitters should be given reasons why.

7. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each Department to uphold the complaint and compliment handling policy and procedures and follow them as appropriate. It is the responsibility of each Department and corresponding Team to directly respond to complaints. Overall responsibility for adherence to this Policy lies with the Chief Operating Officer at Plan International Australia or their delegate.

The Marketing and Communications Department is responsible for publicising this Policy on the website and in marketing material and ensuring the submission process is accessible. The Donor Contact Centre (DCC) and the DCC Manager will maintain and update the Procedures, for Australian based complaints, as they are usually the first point of contact for stakeholders making a complaint or compliment, and will triage the submission to the appropriate individual, supported by the Associate Director, Marketing & Communications.

The Impact to Scale Department is responsible for liaising with country office counterparts to ensure that the PII child-friendly feedback and complaints approach is being applied and contextualised.. This PIA policy will be detailed in the Funding Agreement Document (FAD) which exists for each project between Plan Australia and the Country Office (CO). By signing the FAD each CO Partner agrees to follow this policy and handle complaints on Plan Australia's behalf with project stakeholders.

The CO will be the first point of contact for complaint and compliment handling in-country. PIA Program Managers will receive details of complaints relating to Plan Australia funding as appropriate. Opportunities for CO partners to notify PIA staff of complaints emerging in projects, also exists in reporting cycles, with PIA's reporting templates having a specific section in the report template asking whether any complaints have been made during the course of the reporting period.

Complaints will be escalated to PIA by the CO for response as required.

A Senior Complaints and Compliments Officer for the organisation will be designated (Associate Director, Marketing & Communications) with the support of the Donor Contact Centre Manager for public facing activities/responses.

8. Appeals Process

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint they can appeal and ask for the matter to be reviewed by the Departmental Director. A full review and response will be provided within 10 business days from Appeal. In the unlikely event that the complainant is still not completely satisfied, the matter will be referred to the CEO for a full review and response within a further 10 business days.

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In the most unusual circumstance the matter will be referred to a relevant independent industry or consumer body if the complainant is not satisfied with the CEO's response. These organisations will be able to provide a third party voice and opinion on the matter.

Also refer to the PIA Privacy Policy <https://www.plan.org.au/contact/privacy>.

9. Our Commitment

PIA, its Board and Senior Management Team are fully committed to an integrated complaints and compliments handling system and providing the necessary support for it to operate effectively.

Adequate resources will be made available to support the Complaint and Compliment Handling Policy and Procedure and existing and new staff will be trained on how to respond to and document a complaint or compliment.

10. References

- [ACFID Code of Conduct](#)
- [FIA Code of Conduct](#)
- Plan International's [Accountability Commitments](#)
- [Plan International Child-friendly feedback mechanism guide and toolkit](#)

11. Related Documents

- Plan Australia Public Statement for the Plan [website](#)
- Plan Australia Complaint Handling Guidelines & DCC Procedures
- Plan Australia Grievance Policy
- Plan International Child Protection & Safeguarding Complaints Process
- Whistle Blowing Policy