



Merciful Group INC

Complaints Handling Policy

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Merciful Group INC

Complaints Handling Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that Merciful Group Inc.- INC (MG) handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and our governing body, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about us, regarding our services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

Care will be taken to ensure that the complaint handling policy and procedure is aligned with other requirements that may be in the constitution or relevant legislation.

1.3. Organisational commitment

This organisation expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that each commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
CEO or chairperson of the governing body	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the governing body on our complaint handling • Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints • Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints • Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly • Encourage staff to make recommendations to improve the complaints handling system • Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements based on analysis of complaint data
Staff whose duties include complaint handling	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all people with dignity and respect, including people who submit complaints • Assist people to make a complaint, if necessary • Comply with relevant policies and procedures • 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 management system • Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from analysis of complaint data
All staff	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all people with dignity and respect, including people who submit complaints • Be aware of complaint handling policies and procedures • Assist people who wish to make complaints with our complaints process • Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints in order to resolve the matter promptly

2. Definitions of key terms

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Complaint handling/management system

All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used to manage complaints

Dispute

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside the organisation

Feedback

Opinions, comments 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.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a workrelated issue

Mediation

A structured negotiation process where an independent person, known as a mediator, assists the parties to identify and assess options and negotiate an agreement to resolve their dispute

Policy

A written statement with instruction that sets out how to fulfil our vision, mission and objectives

Procedure

A written statement with instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom

3. Guiding Principles

To be effective, a complaint handling system should be built on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into the organisational culture.

3.1. Facilitate complaints

Focus on people

MG is committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame.

People who wish to make complaints will be:

- a. Provided with information about the complaint handling process and how to access it
- b. Listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved throughout the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- c. Provided with reasons for our decision(s) and any options for redress or further review

No detriment to people making complaints

MG will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected or suffer any detriment merely because they have made a complaint.

Anonymous complaints

MG accepts anonymous complaints, provided there is a compelling reason for doing so and will carry out a confidential investigation of any issues raised where there is sufficient information given.

Accessibility

MG will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised on our website (if available). Our company will ensure that our complaint handling systems are easily understood and accessible to everyone, especially for those who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or requires another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the submission and/or the resolution of their complaint, MG is happy to communicate with them through their representative if they wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent, e.g. family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

Free of charge

MG will not charge any fees for processing complaints.

3.2. Respond to complaints

Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with MG.

Where appropriate, an explanation or apology may be offered to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

MG will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

MG will assess and prioritise complaints depending on the urgency and/or severity of the issues raised. If a complaint concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

MG is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform complainants (as soon as possible) of the following:

- a. The steps in the complaints process
- b. The expected time frames for our actions
Updates on the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
Their likely involvement in the process, and
The possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

MG will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be referred (if known and appropriate).

MG will also advise when we are unable to meet our expected time frames for responding to their complaint and any reasons for our delay.

Objectivity and fairness

MG will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

MG will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is the subject of the complaint.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed in a responsible manner. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision-maker.

Flexible approach

The staff at MG are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem-solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

MG will assess each complaint based on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

MG will endeavour to protect the identity of people making complaints where it is practical and appropriate.

Personal identification information will only be disclosed or used by MG as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

3.3. Manage the parties to a complaint

Complaints involving multiple agencies

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, MG will work with the other organisation(s) where possible, to ensure that communication with the complainant and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to ensure a timely response to the complainant.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within the organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

Where MG's services are outsourced, it is anticipated that contracted service providers will have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. MG will take complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of our external service providers.

Empowerment of staff

All staff responsible for managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

MG is committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints.

Our success depends on:

- a. Our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- b. The health, safety and security of our staff, and
- c. Our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints received

When people behave in an unreasonable manner in their dealings with MG, this can significantly inhibit the progress and efficiency of our process. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably impacts us and will support our staff accordingly.

Alternative dispute resolution avenues

MG may choose to inform people who make complaints to or about us about any alternative internal or external review options available to them (including relevant regulatory bodies or the relevant Ombudsman).

Three levels of complaint handling

Level 1

MG endeavours to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible, staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being provided with appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2

Where the matter cannot be resolved at the frontline, MG may choose to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within the organisation. The second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- a. Assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and any decisions already made and/or
- b. Facilitated resolution (where a third party not connected with the complaint, reviews the matter and attempts to reach an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties)

Level 3

Where a complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external and independent review of our decision, e.g. by the Australian Charities and Not-forProfits Commission (ACNC).

4. Accountability and Learning

4.1. Analysis and evaluation of complaints

MG will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic manner so that information can easily

be accessed for reporting and analysis by management and the governing body of Directors.

MG will run regular reports on:

- a. The number of complaints received
- b. The outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at level 1
- c. Issues arising from complaints
- d. Systemic issues identified, and
- e. The number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling

Regular analysis of these reports will be conducted to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to our CEO, senior management and to our governing body for review on an annual basis.

4.2. Monitoring the complaint management system

MG will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- a. Ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
- b. Identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system, and
- c. Monitoring may include the use of audits and complaint satisfaction surveys

4.3. Continuous improvement

MG is committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To continually improve our complaints handling system, we will:

- a. Support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- b. Implement the best practices in complaint handling
- c. Recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- d. Regularly review the complaint management system and complaint data, and
- e. Implement system changes according to the analysis of complaints data and monitoring