

This Complaints Policy sets out AFS Australia's commitment to responding fairly, constructively and consistently to concerns or complaints about our programs and services.

## Our Commitment

AFS Australia is committed to ensuring quality experiences and services for participants and their families, external stakeholders such as educational authorities, regulatory bodies, corporate and international partners, and our own staff and volunteers.

We welcome and invite feedback on what we do, both positive and critical, and will use that feedback to continuously improve our operations. In the event that there is concern or dissatisfaction with our programs, processes and communications we will endeavour to address them in a responsive, fair, consistent and efficient way.

AFS will make its complaint process transparent and accessible, will monitor and report on its use, and will regularly review this Policy to ensure it continues to be relevant.

## Complaints Management

This Policy applies to any complaint or dissatisfaction about AFS Australia's business – our intercultural learning programs, the services we contract to deliver for others, the interactions we have with stakeholders such as schools, regulators and partners, and the relationships we have with suppliers and other service providers to AFS.

Such complaints might be in relation to, for example: the quality, timeliness and efficiency of our programs and services; the communications and interactions with staff and volunteers; or the appropriateness and accuracy of our information.

Issues within AFS Australia, for example decisions relating to staff and volunteers, or grievances between individuals who work for us are dealt with through our grievance handling processes.

Management of complaints will be based on the following principles:

- We will ensure complainants understand the process and how resolution will be sought;
- Formal complaints will be recorded and acknowledged, and their progress documented;
- We will provide an appropriate response and resolution as soon as possible; if this requires longer than 4 weeks the reasons will be communicated to the complainant;
- The issue will be dealt with by staff or volunteers who have the appropriate skills, experience and independence;
- Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible;
- Complainants will be advised of outcomes as soon as possible after a decision is made; and
- The Partner Director and the Board will undertake periodic reviews and audits of complaints handling and use this information to improve AFS systems.

## Our Process

There may be many issues of concern or dissatisfaction which are relatively minor and can be addressed in an informal way by the most appropriate person. We encourage people to take such matters to local volunteers or program support staff in National Office where they may be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible.

Where this 'frontline' resolution does not satisfactorily address the complainant's issue, and/or they wish to make a formal complaint:

1. Complaints should be made in writing, either by email contact at [aus.complaints@afs.org](mailto:aus.complaints@afs.org) or addressed to the *Partner Director, AFS Intercultural Programs Australia, PO Box 5, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012*. This should provide the type and nature of the complaint; the complainant's details, and indicating (if relevant) the resolution they are seeking. AFS will treat anonymous complaints on their merits but this may limit the action that may be taken.
2. AFS will discuss and document the complaint, provide any relevant information about the issue, and advise the complainant on the action to be taken and probable timeframe for decision. If longer than 4 weeks they will provide reasons and feedback.
3. The complaint will be investigated in a robust, unbiased and timely fashion and an appropriate response or remedy will be provided. Complainants will be given reasons for any negative decisions. Remedies will aim to be fair to both the complainant and to AFS and will be applied consistently to similar situations.
4. If a resolution is not reached, AFS will review the decision and consider alternative mechanisms which may be relevant. It may refer the complainant to external agencies, for example, Ombudsman, tribunals where this is appropriate.

## Responsibilities

The Partner Director is responsible for the implementation of this Policy and the complaints handling process. Where necessary, issues and decisions may be referred to the Board of AFS.

## Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed at least every two years to ensure it remains up to date.

## Other Resources

*AFS Privacy Policy*  
*AFS Code of Conduct*