



Australian Government



Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

Complaint Handling Policy

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Document purpose

This Complaint Handling Policy (Policy) aims to ensure that NAIF handle Complaints (as defined below) fairly, efficiently and effectively by providing guidance on how to raise a Complaint.

Our Complaint handling process is intended to:

- enable NAIF to respond to issues in a timely and cost-effective way;
- boost public confidence in NAIF's handling of Complaints; and
- provide information that can be used by NAIF for continuous improvement.

1. Definitions

Complaint is a grievance or criticism made to NAIF about its services or Staff. Each of the following is not included as a Complaint and is not covered by this Policy:

- public interest disclosures [refer NAIF Public Interest Disclosure Policy];
- code of conduct complaints [refer NAIF Code of Conduct];
- requests for information [refer NAIF Freedom of Information Policy];
- responses to requests for Feedback on the standard of NAIF's provision of service;
- grievances or criticisms raised in or through the media (including social media);
- grievances or criticisms raised in or through campaign activity (including auto-generated and activity of a generic nature);
- grievances or criticisms raised during the ordinary course of discussions or negotiations between NAIF, project proponents or other parties in relation to particular projects (for example in relation to particular stances taken by NAIF on particular issues) where there is no reasonable expectation of, or specific request for, the issue or matter to be dealt with under this Policy;
- grievances or criticisms which relate to Government policy or political matters (e.g. lobbying activity);
- grievances or criticisms arising under or out of judicial reviews or similar review processes or other legal processes where those grievances and criticisms can be adequately addressed by those processes;
- grievances or criticisms of a trivial or vexatious nature;
- grievances or criticisms not lodged with NAIF in accordance with the requirements of clause 9;
- grievances or criticisms where a response or resolution under this Policy would not reasonably be expected.

Complaint Manager is the Manager, Risk & Compliance unless otherwise appointed by the NAIF Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Complainant is the affected person or organisation making the Complaint.

Efic is the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation.

Efic Service Level Agreement means the service agreement between NAIF and Efic dated 5 April 2017 (as amended or replaced from time to time).

Feedback captures opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about NAIF, about services or Complaint handling where a response is not expected or legally required.

Staff means persons employed by, or operating under an employment or similar contract with NAIF including full-time and part-time employees, consultants, contractors and Efic personnel working on NAIF matters under the Efic Service Level Agreement.

2. Overview

The *Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling* (BPG Complaint Handling) published by the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) outlines five key principles for effective Complaint handling.



This Policy sets out how NAIF applies these principles in its Complaint handling process.

Key points to note are:

- NAIF applies the information privacy principles in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) regarding the collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal information. Refer to NAIF's Privacy Policy.
- Complaints of wrongdoing made under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (Cth) are handled in accordance with NAIF's Public Interest Disclosure Policy (PID Policy).
- Other relevant policies include NAIF's Incident Reporting Policy, Anti-Corruption Policy and Code of Conduct;
- This policy is published on NAIF's website and provides the information required to submit a Complaint (refer Section 9).

3. Policy Statement

NAIF values Feedback and is committed to an effective Complaints handling process that reflects the needs, expectations and rights of all Complainants.

The objectives of this Policy are to ensure that NAIF has a structured process for responding to, recording and reporting Complaints. It includes procedures for raising Complaints, for Staff to resolve Complaints fairly, promptly and professionally, and information that can assist in preventing dissatisfaction with NAIF services in the future.

NAIF aims to ensure that Complainants are:

- provided with information on the Complaint handling process;
- provided with multiple ways to make a Complaint;
- listened to, treated with respect and kept informed of the Complaint process; and
- provided with reasons for decisions and options for review.

NAIF takes all reasonable steps to ensure Complainants are not adversely affected by the Complaint handling process.

Failure by Staff to comply with the obligations set out in this Policy may result in disciplinary action.

4. Review and Approval

The Policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if required, by or on behalf of the NAIF Executive, to ensure it remains aligned with governing legislation and best practice. The Board approves all material amendments and reviews the Policy at least every two years.

The Manager, Risk & Compliance will ensure material changes to the Policy are communicated to staff in a timely manner.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|---|
| Board and Board Audit & Risk Committee (BARC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board is responsible for approving this Policy in line with Section 4 of this Policy The BARC is responsible for reviewing this Policy and endorsing it for Board approval. |
| CEO | <p>The CEO is responsible for overseeing a culture that values Complaints and effective resolution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing adequate support and direction to Staff where required Where appropriate, directly responding to third party Complaints (but respecting the responsibilities of Staff to manage day to day transactional matters) Encouraging Staff to make recommendations for Complaint handling process improvements |
| Complaint Manager | <p>The Complaint Manager is responsible for enabling the Complaint handling process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring recommendations arising from Complaint data analysis are canvassed with the CEO and Chief of Staff and implemented where appropriate Training Staff on the Complaints handling process Keeping informed of best practice in Complaint handling |
| All Staff | <p>Staff are responsible for complying with NAIF's Complaint handling process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treating all Complainants with respect Assisting Complainants, if needed, subject to any direction from the Complaint Manager Complying with this policy and its associated procedures Providing Feedback on issues arising from Complaints to management Providing suggestions on ways to improve the Complaints handling process Implementing changes to this Policy when directed Being alert to Complaints and assisting those handling Complaints resolve matters promptly Undertaking Complaint handling training and understanding Complaint handling obligations |

6. Managing the parties to a Complaint

Where a Complaint involves multiple organisations, NAIF endeavours to, where possible, ensure that communication with the Complainant is clear and coordinated. Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, sharing of information is organised between the parties to a Complaint in order to facilitate a timely response.

Responsibility for communicating with the Complainant is coordinated by the Complaint Manager.

NAIF is committed to being accessible and responsive to all Complainants and this depends on:

- the ability to work and perform required functions effectively and efficiently;
- the health, safety and security of Staff; and
- the ability to allocate Complaint handling resources equitably.

NAIF takes proactive and decisive action to manage conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects Staff and the efficiency of the Complaint handling process.

7. Complaint handling process

When responding to Complaints, Staff should act in accordance with the Complaint handling process as well as other relevant documentation including legislation and/or regulations including those listed in Section 3 of this Policy and the BPG Complaint Handling.

7.1 Five key stages

The five key stages in the NAIF Complaint handling process are set out below.



Receive

NAIF records all Complaints and supporting information. The record of the Complaint will document:

- the contact information of the Complainant;
- issues raised by the Complainant and desired outcomes if provided by the Complainant; and
- any additional support the Complainant has advised is required.

Acknowledge

NAIF will acknowledge receipt of each Complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 business days.

Consideration is given to the most appropriate communication (e.g. email, letter) for contacting the Complainant.

Assess and investigate

After acknowledging receipt of the Complaint, NAIF confirms whether the issue raised in the Complaint is within its control. NAIF considers the outcome sought by the Complainant and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a Complaint will be managed, NAIF considers:

- how serious, complex and urgent the Complaint is;
- whether or not the Complaint raises health and safety concerns for NAIF, the Complainant or any other relevant stakeholder;
- the impact on the Complainant of the Complaint;
- the risks associated with delays in resolution; and
- whether or not resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

Actions taken by NAIF to manage the Complaint are tailored to each case and take into account statutory requirements. In general, NAIF gathers information and investigates the claims made in the Complaint. Where possible NAIF provides the Complainant with information on progress including any expected delays.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, that arise within the course of the Complaint handling process are managed in line with NAIF's Conflict of Interest Policy. Internal reviews of the Complaint handling process are managed via NAIF's internal audit program. Where a Complaint is made against the Complaint Manager, it will be considered by the CEO who will appoint an appropriate person either within or external to NAIF to handle the Complaint.

Decision

Following consideration of the Complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, NAIF contacts the Complainant and advises:

- the outcome of the Complaint and actions taken by NAIF in the investigation;
- the reasons for the outcome;
- the remedy or resolutions that NAIF proposes; and
- the options for review that may be available.

If in the course of investigation, NAIF makes adverse findings about an individual, it will consider its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1998* and any applicable exemptions, before sharing findings with the Complainant.

Close

NAIF keeps comprehensive records relating to:

- the Complaint handling process;
- the outcome of Complaints including substantiation details and recommendations; and
- outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

The Complaint Manager is responsible for ensuring outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported. Complaint data and analysis is submitted to the Board Audit and Risk Committee every six months.

7.2 Three levels of Complaint handling

NAIF aims to resolve Complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible Staff will be adequately equipped to respond to Complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Where this is not possible, the Complaint Manager may decide to escalate the Complaint to a more senior person within NAIF. This second level of Complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the Complaint and decisions already made; and/or
- facilitated resolution where an independent person within NAIF reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties.

Finally, where a Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome proposed or actioned by NAIF, they may seek an external review of the decision (e.g. by the OCO refer Section 9).

8. Accountability and learning

8.1 Analysis and evaluation of Complaints

NAIF records Complaints in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis, including:

- the number of Complaints received;
- the outcome of Complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline;
- issues arising from Complaints;
- systemic issues identified; and
- the number of requests NAIF receives for internal and/or external review of the Complaint handling process.

This enables NAIF to monitor trends, measure the quality of customer service and make improvements where necessary.

8.2 Monitoring and continuous improvement

NAIF continually monitors its Complaint handling process to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving Complaints; and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the process.

NAIF aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its Complaint handling process by:

- supporting Complainants and the appropriate resolution;
- implementing where appropriate best practice Complaint handling;
- regularly reviewing the Complaints handling process and Complaint data; and
- implementing process changes where appropriate.

9. How to submit a Complaint

The following contact details must be used for submitting a Complaint:

NAIF Complaints
P.O. Box 4896
Cairns QLD 4870

E-mail: complaint@naif.gov.au

A Complaint is to be submitted in writing and must include the following details:

- Name, preferred phone number, email and postal addresses;
- If representing another party, their contact information;
- An outline of the Complaint and any previous efforts made to resolve the matter;
- The desired outcome or result of the Complaint (in order to understand and manage expectations); and
- Any previous contact with NAIF on this or similar issues.

If a Complaint is made and the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, the Complainant may contact the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) on 1300 362 072 or via an [online complaint form](#). The OCO safeguards the community in its dealings with the Australian government and aims to make sure the actions of agencies are fair and responsible.