It is important that this Policy accurately reflects the current situation and organisational requirements of Conciliation Resources Australia (CRA) / the South East Asian and the Pacific (SEAP) Department. It is the responsibility of the SEAP Human Resources department to review this Policy every three years or in the event of any organisational changes or statutory changes, make any updates if necessary and receive approval by the SEAP Department Director and CR Executive Director before publishing it.

CRA and SEAP are used interchangeably throughout this document. CRA is used when referring to the legal structure based in Australia and SEAP will refer to the collective department structure.
Purpose

We recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when organisations or individuals may feel that CRA may have fallen short of what they could reasonably expect or that CRA position on a policy issue may have caused them harm.

Your continued goodwill is greatly appreciated by us and we would expect to resolve any day-to-day difficulties or complaints, informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would expect you to raise any complaint directly with the member of staff concerned.

The more formal procedure outlined below is intended for use where informal communication has not resolved the issue.

Scope

This policy is intended for use by anyone who has interaction with Conciliation Resources Australia (CRA) as an organisation or with CRA and its position on policy issues.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under The Privacy Act 1988, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations. Whistleblower will be protected as per the Whistleblower protection laws under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) (Corporations Act).

Type of Complaints

Any complaints that do not fall under the below complaints will be handled in accordance with the Complaints policy.

Grievance

A complaint made by an individual staff member or anyone who has interaction with CRA about another staff member is referred to CRA's Grievance policy.

Fraud/Corruption/Bribery

A complaint made by an individual staff member or anyone who has interaction with CRA about another staff member or CRA, in relation to fraud, corruption and/or bribery is referred to CRA's Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery policy.

Whistleblowing Policy

To report a potential misconduct about another staff member or about CRA, is referred to CRA's Whistleblowing policy.
Whilst Conciliation Resources asks all staff, volunteers, board members and guests to attempt resolution of incidents within the framework provided by the organisation, it is recognised that in some circumstances external awareness may need to be raised outside this framework. CRA maintains a Whistleblowing Policy which can be found in Employment Hero and on the CR website.

Charity employees can report concerns about certain categories of serious wrongdoing at their charity to The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) using Raise a Concern. There is no specific protection for whistleblowers under the ACNC Act. Read here what ACNC can investigate.

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Incidents and reports involving bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) and discrimination will be referred to CRA's Bullying and Harassment policy.

Regulatory reporting

Some incidents and reports of Bullying and Harassment, particularly those that involve a formal Grievance, Complaint or Disciplinary Procedure or that otherwise involve Serious Misconduct, may need to be reported to the Board of Trustees and various regulatory bodies.

The Chief Operating Officer will work with the Board to ensure that serious incident reporting requirements are complied with, following Charity Commission Guidance (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity). CRA is required to notify the UK Charity Commission about a 'serious incident'.

Complaints involving multiple agencies

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

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

Who to report

For early resolution, you are encouraged to contact your first point of contact if the complaint is not about them. This approach may be useful where the behaviour being complained about is not serious and does not appear to be discrimination or harassment, as defined by the CRA's listed under 'Type of Complaints' section in this policy.

If you don’t have a point of contact in CRA or you are not comfortable making a complaint to them, the complaint should be made either in person, or by telephone, face, letter or email to the CRA's Operations Director who will acknowledge, in writing, within ten working days, receipt of any complaint.

In addition to stating the nature and circumstances of the complaint, the complainant is strongly encouraged to state the remedial action they wish to be taken.

Other than the need to report a complaint to CRA complainants may also deem it necessary, or be required to, report the issue through any of the following means.
Anonymous reporting

If you feel unable to associate yourself with a report, you are encouraged to present relevant information anonymously to the Operations Director by the following means:

- Via anonymous google form which can be found at google form
- Via email from an alternative & anonymous email address
- Via anonymous letter
- Via any other anonymous and confidential means

It is acknowledged that the ability to follow-up on such reports is extremely limited, both legally and practically. CRA encourages the use of our informal and formal reporting methods outlined above wherever possible.

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

CRA takes a survivor-centred approach when investigating a complaint, including taking into consideration the wishes and welfare of the complainant/survivor when reporting. This is not applicable where there is mandatory reporting of child safeguarding.

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

If the complaint is about the Operations Director, the complaint should be addressed to the “Department Director” (marked Confidential). At this stage the complainant may be accompanied or supported by a friend or a family member if they wish to, who can provide emotional support to the complainant. If they wish to bring a support person, it needs to be informed to the person who is handling the complaint in advance.

You are also referred to CRA’s Whistleblowing Policy, which can be found on this page of our website, which provides alternative points for you to raise concerns. We would however encourage you to contact CRA in the first instance to resolve any concerns you may have.

Complaint handling process

We 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.

The process and requirements for filing a complaint will take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable and will consider minority and disadvantaged stakeholders.

We are committed to managing people’s expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- 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. We 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 directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

The three levels of complaint handling:

Level 1

We aim 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. You are encouraged to contact your first contact if the complaint is not about them.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within our organisation. This second level of complaint handling will be done by the Operations Director or they can escalate it to the relevant team member such as Human Resources who will assess and conduct possible investigation of the complaint and facilitate resolution or an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties. This will be done within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days of the complainant being received and acknowledged. If the complaint is found to be justified, the Operations Director (or Department Director) will agree any necessary further actions with the complainant.

The Operations Director (Or Department Director) will keep the Board of CRA informed of the number and nature of complaints, and the outcomes on at least an annual basis.

Appeal

The complainant will have the right – if dissatisfied with the results of the enquiry – to put their case, in writing, to an appeal panel of three members of the Board of CRA, which will include at least one Honorary Officer (i.e. Chair or Treasurer). Any appeal must be lodged within 20 days from the date of the original findings of the complaint investigation being communicated in writing to the complainant. The appeal will be dealt with within 20 working days of receipt of the wish to appeal by the complainant.

If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree any necessary further action with the complainant. The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further action is possible.

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision (by the Australian Charities and Not for- Profits Commission for example).

External reporting and complaints

Staff, volunteers, board members and guests should not hesitate to bring incidents to the attention of local authorities when they feel that it is necessary and appropriate. Staff, volunteers, board members and guests must bring incidents to the attention of local authorities when required to do so by law.

Further external reporting may be necessary in some instances. Depending on the incident, the individual/s, the conditions and contractual relations, incidents and complaints may need to be
reported to funders and consortium partners. The Operations Director will evaluate all Grievances and Complaints to determine whether they need to be reported to regulatory authorities. The Operations Director will also evaluate whether such incidents need to be reported to funders.

Complaints that do not fall within the scope of this policy (for example, complaints against an employee of another organisation or government department), will be reported to the Operations Director who will implement a referral process to include all relevant external stakeholders. In a situation such as this CRA will aim to uphold our standard complaints handling process as closely as possible.

In all instances, care must be taken to ensure the rights of individuals.

**Recording and Documentation**

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and/or by the governing body.

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

Operations Director (or the escalated authority) or the Department Director who are working on the complaint will ensure the relevant documentation is saved securely without compromising the confidentiality of the complaint or the report and the complainant/disclosure.

CRA will also run regular reports on:

- 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 we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of complaint handling and make improvements. These reports and the analysis will be used to further improve our internal processes.

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the Operations Director (complaint handling officer), senior management or the CRA Board or the governing body as required.

If you have a complaint, contact:
Operations Director (or address it to the Department Director)
Conciliation Resources Australia Limited
552 Victoria Street, North Melbourne, Victoria 3051, Australia
Tel: +61 480400424
Email: seaphr@c-r.org