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Title: External Stakeholders Complaints Handling Policy	

Background

Burnet's mission is to achieve better health for vulnerable communities in Australia and internationally by accelerating the translation of research, discovery and evidence into sustainable health solutions.

As a Medical Research Institute and a DFAT-Accredited NGO that works with a range of stakeholder groups both in Australia and internationally, Burnet strives to provide best practice across the range of services and interactions it provides and where required, an avenue for an effective mechanism for handling complaints.

Burnet welcome's feedback whether in the form of complaints, compliments, or suggestions from individuals, groups or organisations with which we have interacted in some way. This feedback will help ensure our services, processes and procedures better meet the needs of those we interact with and that issues raised are addressed in the most appropriate manner. It will also help develop our services and interactions by reinforcing what we are doing right and providing positive feedback to staff, as well as looking at how we can improve.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to give context and direction to Burnet's external stakeholder's complaint handling procedures. Under this policy we:

Recognise, promote and protect the individual's or external organisation's right to comment and complain about their dealings with Burnet;

Provide an efficient, fair and accessible framework for resolving complaints;

Identify how we will communicate about the complaints handling process;

Set standards for dealing with complaints; and

Support the monitoring of complaints in an endeavour to improve the quality of the services Burnet provides.

Scope

This Policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it. We will accept complaints relating to our paid staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf.

A complaint may be made by a person to whom we deliver services or goods or who is affected by our services or goods, a partner, a local organisation with which we work our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public. Anonymous complaints can be made, but obviously our ability to investigate them may be limited because of this.

Definitions

Complaint: means any indication that an external person or organisation is dissatisfied with the communications, personal interactions, processes, services, or facilities provided by the Burnet where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant means a person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

Enquiry means a request for information or an explanation

Feedback means opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the products or the complaint handling process

Stakeholder means a person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation

Policy statement/overview

1. Our commitment

This policy will be readily accessible on Burnet's website. All complaints will be handled quickly, discretely, fairly, effectively and courteously.

Burnet is committed to ensuring:

- the rights of the complainant are protected,
- that requirements for filing a complaint take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable and considers minority and disadvantaged stakeholders,
- the rights of the staff who receive complaints, or who may be the subject of a complaint.

Burnet will ensure that stakeholders are aware of their right to complain by promoting these complaint handling procedures on the website via the external newsletter, annual report, partnership agreements and in appropriate forms and media that is easily understood by the communities where we work.

Burnet will provide information on how staff and volunteers are equipped to understand and implement the policy. Personnel directly involved in complaint handling are fully trained in all aspects of this policy and its implementation.

Understanding patterns of complaints empowers managers to improve service and prioritise resources for future planning. Burnet will analyse and monitor the complaints received and report these to the Board on a regular basis.

- All staff and external stakeholders will have easy access to Burnet's complaint handling policy and procedures.
- Where appropriate we will ensure that personnel working in communities we serve have all necessary training to encourage and handle inquiries, expressions of concern and making of complaints so as to take account of cultural and gender sensitivities and to ensure that cases involving children or sexual exploitation and abuse are appropriately handled.

2. Complaints record

It is important to record external stakeholder complaints in order to:

- Track progress of complaints
- Ensure accountability
- Identify and fix root causes
- Enable data analysis and management reporting.

- Enable continuous improvement and learning.

Burnet will identify and record all complaints. Data about external complaints will be electronically recorded at one centralised point to allow for the monitoring of complaint procedures, to analyse complaints, and to report to management on complaints to allow for service improvement.

The physical record of all complaints and responses to those complaints will be filed in Public Affairs and Development to allow for accountability and audit as required.

In addition the register of complaints will be recorded in the Board reports and raised at the Burnet Executive to ensure issues raised that require implementation of policy or procedural changes are addressed at senior management level.

3. Response Standard:

Melbourne staff who receive a formal complaint from a stakeholder should immediately contact the Head of Public Affairs and Development who will then deal with the issue in the most effective manner.

Complaints can be received in person or by letter, email, telephone or via social media. We recognise that in some circumstances complainants may wish to remain anonymous. Because such complaints can alert us to problems that need fixing we will accept them though clearly it may not be possible to provide a remedy to an individual.

Standards for response to a complaint:

We will acknowledge oral complaints immediately. For complaints received in person at the country office or field site by a staff member we will ensure our write up of the complaint contains all the information the complainant wishes to provide. This will be referred to the Country Representative who will also inform the Head of International Operations and the Head of Public Affairs and Development in Melbourne of the complaint.

We will acknowledge written complaints received by letter or email, within 3 working days at a minimum to acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

We will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and within 30 days unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a complaint is not resolved within 30 days we will inform the complainant of progress and keep them informed of progress every two weeks.

Where appropriate, we may utilise complaint/suggestion boxes for different stakeholders (e.g. child-friendly feedback mechanisms) or establish complaint committees involving representatives from partner organisations and members of communities we are serving.

4. Complaints Procedure

The following procedure applies to persons wishing to lodge a complaint. Burnet's Head of Public Affairs assumes responsibility for managing all complaints through to completion.

- i. The complaint should be in writing and sent either by mail, email or fax to the complaints officer (Head of Public Affairs & Development). If uncertain contact can be made by telephone. Head Office contact details are as follows: Head Public Affairs, GPO Box 2284 Melbourne 3001 or email: **feedback@burnet.edu.au** or

Tel +61 3 9282 2111 Fax +61 3 9282 2100

- ii. Once received, the complaint will be registered in our complaints handling system, and the Head of Public Affairs will issue a letter acknowledging its receipt to the complainant within 3 working days.
- iii. The relevant senior staff associated with the case in question will investigate the complaint together with the Head of Public Affairs.
- iv. The complaint may be escalated to Burnet's CEO or Board if deemed appropriate by the Head of Public Affairs.
- v. A written and verbal response will be made to the complainant in relation to the course of action to be taken.
- vi. Burnet is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and signatory to their Code of Conduct. Should this outcome not be satisfactory to the complainant and resolve the issue, an appeal can be made for review or the matter elevated to ACFID at: Private Bag 3, Deakin, ACT, 2600 or by calling +61 2 6285 1816, or emailing main@acfid.asn.au
- vii. Complaints can also be lodged in each of the countries in which Burnet has a presence. See contact details below:

Papua New Guinea : Section 90, Lot 1 Takubar, East New Britain Mailing: PO Box 1458, Kopoko Post Office, Kokopo, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea

Myanmar: No 226, 4th Floor, 226 Wizaya Plaza, U Wisara Road, Bahan Township, Yangon ,Myanmar (Burma)

Responsibility for implementation

The Executive Group is responsible for the oversight and review of this policy. The Head of Public Affairs is responsible for implementation.

Working Group Heads, Activity Leads and Activity Managers are responsible for ensuring that this Policy information is provided to all stakeholders, including to members of the communities where activities are implemented, in particular about the reporting and complaints handling procedure.

Related Policies/ Procedures/Guidance

Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Burnet Code of Conduct Policy

Whistleblower Policy

Philosophies and Values Statement

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Complaints and Disputes Procedure

Disciplinary Policy

ACFID Code of Conduct Guidelines for the Development of a Complaints Policy, Oct 2017

ACFID Code of Conduct: Quality Principles

- 7.3.3 Members enable stakeholders to make complaints to the organisation in a safe and confidential manner
- 7.3.5 Members seek input and feedback from all stakeholders