

Policy number	8	Version	3.0
Updated by	Deirdre Looney	Approved by Board on	02/09/2022
Responsible person	AMS Board	Scheduled review date	02/09/2024

## Introduction

Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) is the international development arm of the Marist Brothers Province of Australia and the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. It has a particular focus on empowering young people to transform their lives and community. Promoting the dignity of the human person, as safeguarded by internationally recognised human rights conventions, is a core value of AMS.

AMS recognises the importance and value of listening to and responding to concerns and complaints, and is committed to achieving the highest standard in every area of work.

## Purpose

To ensure that all persons affiliated with AMS, including staff, project partners, beneficiaries, stakeholders and any other person or parties, especially the most vulnerable, minority and disadvantaged stakeholders, including children, have a clear and specified avenue through which complaints can be made. AMS places value on receiving concerns and complaints as an important way of learning and improving on its delivery of aid and development programs.

## Scope

This policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it. AMS will accept complaints related to AMS staff, volunteers, directors and anyone else working on the organisation's behalf. Complaints may be made by project partners, direct or indirect beneficiaries of AMS projects and/or activities, community stakeholders, donors, grant providers and any other persons or parties. A complaint may also be made by AMS staff, volunteers or directors.

## Definitions / Terminology

**Complaint:** A formal expression of dissatisfaction or concern. For the purpose of this document, a complaint may be related to (but is not limited to):

- Projects and/or activities funded or delivered by AMS
- Staff, volunteers or directors of AMS

**Complainant:** A person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

**Inquiry:** A request for information or an explanation.

**Feedback:** Opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the service or the complaint handling process.

**Stakeholder or interested party:** A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.

## Policy

AMS encourages complainants to undertake a formal complaints resolution process without concern of retribution, direct or indirect discrimination. AMS will ensure that requirements for filing a complaint take into consideration accessibility by and the needs of the most vulnerable, including children, minority groups and disadvantaged stakeholders. AMS will hold paramount the principle of fairness and will undertake a full investigation into all complaints. At all stages of the complaints resolutions process, AMS will treat complainants respectfully, courteously and sensitively, with due recognition of cultural or other barriers that may impact a complainant's access to justice. AMS will ensure complainants are provided with the opportunity to be heard and that they have an understanding of the AMS complaints resolution process.

In the case of project beneficiaries overseas and in Australia, AMS will work with project partners to facilitate this understanding. Complainants have the right to utilise a support person, advocate and/or interpreter including the provision of culturally appropriate resources.

AMS will ensure systems are in place and resources available to handle and respond to all complaints. AMS will endeavour to manage complaints received in a timely, fair and confidential (where legislative requirements allow) manner.

AMS will ensure that its practices aim to avoid actions that give cause for complaints to be made. This includes continuous improvement of organisational practice through relevant training of staff, volunteer and directors.

## Lodging a Complaint

A complaint may be lodged in any of the following ways:

- Online via the AMS website (FEEDBACK » Australian Marist Solidarity)
- By contacting the AMS CEO, via email ([ams.ceo@marists.org.au](mailto:ams.ceo@marists.org.au)) or via telephone (+61 7 3354 0600)
- Direct to the office: 142 Frasers Rd, Ashgrove, Queensland 4060, Australia

Complaints relating to a breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct can be made here:  
<https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>

## Complaints Management

It is the responsibility of the CEO (or Chair) to prioritise action on a complaint whenever possible. When the complaint is regarding the CEO, or the CEO has a conflict of interest, the Board Chair (or delegate) will manage the complaints process. The process for handling complaints is as follows:

- Receive
- Acknowledge Receipt
- Assess and Investigate
- Determine Outcome / course of action / response to the complainant
- Close complaint - document and analyse

Triaging of the complaint is conducted on receipt, using the AMS Risk Framework to assess the risk level of the complaint and decide on the appropriate action required. Complaints and actions taken will be documented in the AMS Complaints Register and can be de-identified at the request of the complainant. The detailed processes for managing complaints are documented in the AMS Complaints Management Procedures.



For complaints that fall outside the scope of this policy (e.g. complaints against an employee of another organisation), AMS will endeavour to provide appropriate assistance and refer the complaint to the relevant organisation. The CEO is responsible for deciding whether the complaint can be handled by AMS or should be referred.

## People-Focused Response

It is the intention of AMS that all responses are developed in a manner in which the complainant's wishes, safety, wellbeing, dignity and respect remain a priority in all matters and procedures. Acknowledgment of receipt of a complaint will be made promptly, and preferably within two working days. The complainant will be kept informed of progress during the investigation and given an estimated timeframe for an outcome.

AMS is committed to providing appropriate assistance to survivors of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH), which may include medical, social, legal or financial assistance, or referrals to such services). For further information on safeguarding and SEAH, please refer to the AMS Safeguarding Policy.

## Monitoring & Review of Policy

AMS will undertake a review of this policy in accordance with the AMS Policy Review Process as it appears in the AMS Operations Manual or sooner if required. This review will be undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer and authorised by the AMS Board of Directors.

## Related Resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- AMS Complaints Management Procedures
- AMS Safeguarding Policy
- AMS Whistleblower Policy
- AMS Privacy Policy
- AMS Risk Framework
- AMS Code of Conduct
- <https://www.acnc.gov.au/raise-concern/concerns-about-charities/how-raise-concern>
- <https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>

## Authorisation



Signature of Board Secretary

Michael Sinclair

Name of Board Secretary

02/09/2022

Date of Board Approval