

Nusa Tenggara Association

Whistleblower Policy

V2.0 February 2023

Preamble

The NTA recognises the importance and value of listening and responding to concerns and complaints. We are committed to achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work and to continuous improvement. This applies especially to delivery of services, seeking donations and accountability to stakeholders generally. We are committed to working according to or above the standard required by the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). Receiving concerns and complaints is one of the most important ways of learning what we need to do to improve our work.

Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to NTA staff, NTA Board members, volunteers and consultants retained by NTA, and partner organisations of the NTA and their staff.

Introduction

The board of Nusa Tenggara Association (NTA) is committed to operating legally (in accordance with applicable legislation and regulation), properly (in accordance with organisational policy and procedures), and ethically (in accordance with recognised ethical principles). Employees are expected to cooperate with the organisation in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations, if necessary by reporting non-compliant actions by other people. Correspondingly, employees who do assist in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations should not be penalised in any way.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Encourage the reporting of matters that may cause harm to individuals or financial or nonfinancial loss to the NTA or damage to its reputation;
2. Enable NTA to deal with reports from whistleblowers in a way that will protect the identity of the whistleblower as far as possible and provide for the secure storage of the information provided;
3. Establish policies for protecting whistleblowers against reprisal by any person internal or external to the entity;
4. Provide for the appropriate infrastructure; and
5. Help to ensure NTA maintains the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity.

Policy

Concerns regarding illegal or corrupt behaviour

Where an employee of NTA believes in good faith on reasonable grounds that any other employee, volunteer, or contractor has breached any provision of the general law, that employee must report their concern to:

- Their supervisor: or, if they feel that their supervisor may be complicit in the breach,
- The CEO or, if they feel that the CEO may be complicit in the breach,

- The organisation's nominated Whistleblower Protection Officer (WPO) who is NTA's Operations Manager; or, if they feel this to be necessary,
- A person or office independent of the organisation nominated by the organisation to receive such information, or
- The duly constituted authorities responsible for the enforcement of the law in the relevant area.

The person making their concern known shall not suffer any sanctions from the organisation on account of their actions in this regard provided that their actions:

- Are in good faith, and
- Are based on reasonable grounds, and
- Conform to the designated procedures.

Any person within the organisation to whom such a disclosure is made shall:

- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be unquestionably trivial or fanciful, dismiss the allegation and notify the person making the allegation of their decision;
- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be neither trivial nor fanciful, ensure that the allegation is investigated, a finding is made, and the person making the allegation is informed of the finding.

Any such investigation shall observe the rules of natural justice and the provisions of procedural fairness.

Disclosures may be made anonymously, and this anonymity shall as far as possible be preserved by the organisation.

Concerns regarding improper or unethical behaviour

Where an employee of NTA believes in good faith on reasonable grounds that any other employee, volunteer, or contractor has breached any provision of the organisation's constitution, or its bylaws, or its policies, or its code of conduct, or generally recognised principles of ethics, that employee may report their concern to:

- Their supervisor: or, if they feel that their supervisor may be complicit in the breach,
- The CEO: or, if they feel that the CEO may be complicit in the breach,
- A person or office independent of the organisation nominated by the organisation to receive such information.

The person making their concern known shall not suffer any sanctions from the organisation on account of their actions in this regard provided that their actions:

- Are in good faith, and
- Are based on reasonable grounds, and
- Conform to the designated procedures.

Any person within the organisation to whom such a disclosure is made shall:

- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be unquestionably trivial or fanciful, dismiss the allegation and notify the person making the allegation of their decision;
- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be neither trivial nor fanciful, ensure that the allegation is investigated, a finding is made, and the person making the allegation is informed of the finding.

Any such investigation shall observe the rules of natural justice and the provisions of procedural fairness.

Disclosures may be made anonymously, and this anonymity shall as far as possible be preserved by the organisation.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years or as required to assess its effectiveness, appropriateness and accuracy.

Annex

A: NTA Whistleblower Procedures

Version control

Version	Date	Approved by Board	Details
1.0	July 2018	31 July 2018	New Policy to meet ACFID Code of Conduct Compliance requirements.
1.1	31 July 2020	31 July 20	Minor update
2.0	February 2023	21 February 23	Periodic review of the policy extended to every five years.

Annex A

NTA Whistleblower procedures

Responsibilities

The NTA board is responsible for adopting the whistleblower policy, and for nominating the organisation's Whistleblower Protection Officer (WPO).

The Whistleblower Protection Officer is responsible for:

1. Coordinating an investigation into any report received from a whistleblower; and
2. Documenting and handling all matters in relation to the report and investigation; and
3. Finalising all investigations.

The organisation's CEO is responsible for the implementation of the Whistleblower Policy.

All staff and all volunteers are responsible for reporting breaches of general law, organisational policy, or generally recognised principles of ethics to a person authorised to take action on such breaches.

Definitions

A **whistleblower** is a person (being a director, manager, employee or contractor of, or volunteer for, NTA) who, whether anonymously or not, makes, attempts to make or wishes to make a report in connection with reportable conduct and wishes to avail themselves of protection against reprisal for having made the report.

Breaches of general law, organisational policy, or generally recognised principles of ethics include:

- Corrupt conduct;
- Fraud or theft;
- Official misconduct;
- Maladministration;
- Harassment or unlawful discrimination;
- Serious and substantial waste of public resources;
- Practices endangering the health or safety of staff, volunteers, or the general public; and
- Practices endangering the environment.

Complaints regarding occupational health and safety should where possible be made through the organisation's occupational health and safety procedures contained in NTA's Human Resources Policy.

PROCESSES

External reporting entities

The board may nominate external persons to whom, or agencies to which disclosures may be made under the protections offered under this policy. Where such a nomination is made, staff and volunteers should be informed by any appropriate method.

Reporting

Where an employee of NTA believes in good faith on reasonable grounds that any other employee, volunteer, or contractor has breached general law, organisational policy, or generally recognised principles of ethics, and wishes to report their concern, that employee must report their concern to

- Their supervisor: or, if they feel that their supervisor may be complicit in the breach,
- The CEO: or, if they feel that the CEO may be complicit in the breach,
- The organisation's nominated Whistleblower Protection Officer, or
- A person or office independent of the organisation nominated by the organisation to

receive such information, that person or office being the:

- o Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) <https://acfid.asn.au> ; or
- o Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) <http://www.acnc.gov.au> ; or

- Where a breach of general law is alleged:
 - o The duly constituted legal authorities responsible for the enforcement of the law in the relevant area.

These procedures do not authorise any employee to inform commercial media or social media of their concern, and do not offer protection to any employee who does so, unless:

- It is not feasible for employees to report internally; or
- Existing reporting channels have failed to deal with issues effectively.

Any person reporting such a breach should be informed that:

- As far as lies in the organisation's power, the employee will not be disadvantaged for the act of making such a report; and
- If the complainant wishes to make their complaint anonymously, their wish shall be honoured except insofar as it may be overridden by due process of law; however,
- Reporting such a breach does not necessarily absolve the complainant from the consequences of any involvement on their own part in the misconduct complained of.

Any such report should, where possible, be in writing and should contain, as appropriate, details of:

- The nature of the alleged breach;
- The person or persons responsible for the breach;
- The facts on which the complainant's belief that a breach has occurred, and has been committed by the person named, are founded; and
- The nature and whereabouts of any further evidence that would substantiate the complainant's allegations, if known.

Investigation

On receiving a report of a breach, the person to whom the disclosure is made shall:

- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be unquestionably trivial or fanciful, dismiss the allegation and notify the person making the allegation of their decision;
- If they believe the behaviour complained of to be neither trivial nor fanciful, put in motion the investigation process described below.

The person to whom the disclosure was made shall notify the CEO, who shall be responsible for ensuring that an investigation of the charges is established and adequately resourced. The following steps shall be taken:

- Terms of reference for the investigation will be drawn up, in consultation with the CEO, to clarify the key issues to be investigated;
- An investigation plan will be developed to ensure all relevant questions are addressed, the scale of the investigation is in proportion to the seriousness of the allegation(s) and sufficient resources are allocated;
- Strict security will be maintained during the investigative process;
- All information obtained will be properly secured to prevent unauthorised access;
- All relevant witnesses will be interviewed, and documents examined; and
- Contemporaneous notes of all discussions, phone calls and interviews will be made.

Where possible, interviews will be recorded.

The principles of procedural fairness (natural justice) will be observed. In particular, where adverse comment about a person is likely to be included in a report, the person affected will be given an opportunity to comment beforehand and any comments will be considered before the report is finalised.

The person or persons conducting the investigation shall be, as far as possible, unbiased.

Findings

A report will be prepared when an investigation is complete. This report will include:

- The allegations;
- A statement of all relevant findings of fact and the evidence relied upon in reaching any conclusions;
- The conclusions reached (including the damage caused, if any, and the impact on the organisation and other affected parties) and their basis; and
- Recommendations based on those conclusions to address any wrongdoing identified and any other matters arising during the investigation.

Information to informant

Subject to considerations of the privacy of those against whom the allegations are made and customary practices of confidentiality, the whistleblower will be kept informed of:

- Relevant progress of an investigation; and
- Relevant outcomes of an investigation.

Protection of informant

Where the investigation has found that the person making the allegation acted in good faith on reasonable grounds, the CEO shall designate an officer to be responsible for ensuring that the person suffers no employment-related disadvantage on account of their actions in this matter and to provide additional support for the person where necessary.

Related documents

- NTA Human Resources Policy; and
- NTA Complaints and Complaints Handling Policy.