



Whistleblower Protection Policy

Housing Authority

March 2020

1.0 Purpose

This policy is intended to encourage Board members, Employee and members of the public to report suspected or actual occurrence(s) of illegal, unethical or inappropriate events (behaviors or practices) within or by the Housing Authority (HA) without retribution.

More specifically it provides:

- i. accessible and reliable channels to report wrongdoing;
- ii. robust protection from all forms of retaliation; (and)
- iii. mechanisms for disclosures that promote reforms that correct policy or procedural inadequacies, and prevent future wrongdoing.

2.0 Whistleblower Protection

- a. Every Whistleblower will be protected by the HA from all forms of retaliation, disadvantage, or discrimination at the workplace linked to or resulting from the making of a disclosure.
- b. This includes protection from all types of harm, including dismissal, suspension and other job sanctions; punitive transfers; harassment; reduced duties or hours; the withholding of promotions or training; the loss of status and benefits; and threats of such actions.
- c. The protection provided by this sections will not be available to any employee who makes a disclosure that can be demonstrated to be knowingly false.
- d. Any Whistleblower demonstrated to have knowingly made a disclosure that was false or with maliciously intended may be subject to such employment and /or professional sanctions; and/or legal action, as the Board may, by resolution, decide.

3.0 The Procedure for Making A ‘Disclosure’

- a. The Whistle-blower shall promptly report the suspected or actual event to:
 - i. Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance or
 - ii. Chairperson of the HA Board; *(if Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance is not available or comprised)*
- b. If the Whistleblower is not an employee, the Whistleblower shall submit the disclosure in writing.
- c. All disclosure shall contain the following:
 - i. a statement explaining the nature of the alleged wrongdoing; (and)
 - ii. the name or names of the people believed to be involved; (and)
 - iii. the full facts to support the disclosure (including an explanation of how the Whistleblower knows the information provided in the disclosure to be true or likely to be true and details relating to the time and/or place of the alleged wrongdoing if known or relevant).

All disclosure shall be sent or delivered to the Manger Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance or the Chairperson in an envelope clearly marked

**‘Confidential –
To Be Opened by the Addressee Only’.**

- d. The Whistle-blower can report the event with his/her identity or anonymously.
- e. Anyone who retaliates against the Whistle-blower (who reported an event in good faith) will be subjected to disciplinary proceedings.
- f. Crimes against person or property, such as assault, burglary, etc., should immediately be reported to the Fiji Police Force.
- g. Crimes involving corruption, bribery, abuse of office, fraud, etc. should immediately be reported to the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC).
- h. The Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance/Chairperson who receive the reports must promptly act to investigate and/or resolve the issue.
- i. The Whistle-blower shall receive a written acknowledgment within seven (7) business days of the initial report, regarding the investigation or resolution of the issue from the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance (or Chairperson).
- j. If the investigation of a report, that was done in good faith and investigated by HA internal personnel is not to the Whistle-blower's satisfaction, then he/she has the right to report the matter to the appropriate legal or other Investigative agency.
- k. The identity of the whistle-blower, if known, shall remain confidential to those persons directly involved in applying this policy, unless the issue requires investigation by any law enforcement agency.
- l. When Wrongful Conduct is alleged against the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance the person disclosing can disclose the activity to the Chairperson.
- m. If the Whistleblower believes:
 - i. that both the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance and the Chairperson are or may be involved in the wrongdoing or have an association with the person (or persons) named in the disclosure to the degree that it would be inappropriate to disclose it to either of them; or
 - ii. that immediate reference to another Authority is justified by urgent or exceptional circumstance; or
 - iii. if the Whistleblower has not received a written acknowledgment within 7 working days of making the disclosure.

The Whistleblower may make the disclosure to the Minister Responsible for Housing or other agency. Such other agencies include but are not limited to:

- *The Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC);*
- *The Fiji Police Force;*
- *The Office of the Auditor- General of Fiji.*

Every disclosure pursuant to this sub-section shall, in addition to the information required, contain an explanation of the reasons why the Whistleblower has decided to make the disclosure to that other agency (or individual) and not to the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance or to the HA Board Chairperson.

4.0 The Procedure for Investigating the Disclosure

- a. It will be the task of Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance or the Chairperson to assess the complaint and recommend a course of action.
- b. If the decision is that the allegation can be made without a full investigation the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance or the Chairperson (as the case may be) shall, within 10 working days of receiving the disclosure, initiate the required action (if any);
- c. If the decision is that a full investigation is warranted the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance (or Chairperson), as the case may be, shall, within 10 working days of receiving the disclosure, either himself or via some other person (or persons) appointed by him, commence the carrying out of the full investigation.

- d. The investigation process, duration and scope will be determined at the time of investigation as the situation requires.
- e. HA will treat all disclosures made under this Policy in a confidential, sensitive and secure manner. Generally, if the complaint concerns the actions of another HA employee, that person will be informed of the complaint if HA considers it appropriate to do so, subject to consideration relating to the anonymity of the HA employee making the complaint (if applicable).
- f. Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance will submit a report on the outcome of their investigation to the Chief Executive Officer and the HA Board including any recommended actions. The recommendation will be implemented on advice from the Chief Executive Officer or the HA Board. Notwithstanding the above, if the disclosure is against the Chief Executive Officer, the report will be provided directly to the HA Board.
- g. Disclosures submitted to any agency or person other than to the HA shall be dealt with in such manner as that other agency thinks fit.

5.0 Policy Breaches

All policy breaches must be immediately escalated to the Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance. Disciplinary action will be taken against those in Breach of the policy including termination where appropriate.

6.0 Commencement date and Review of Policy

The Policy will be reviewed 12 months after the commencement date.

Employees and/or others wishing to report suspicious activity can:

Contact our Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance on:

E-mail

whistleblower@housing.com.fj

or else fill the Whistleblower form on our Webpage.

The disclosure can also be through:

Post Mail or Hand Delivered to:

Marked as "Confidential"

"To Be Opened by the Addressee Only"

C/- Manager Internal Audit, Risk & Compliance

Housing Authority

P.O.Box 6472 Nasinu

Level 5, Housing Authority Building,

Saga Street, Valelevu, Nasinu.