

Guide for ministerial officers in the Victorian public sector

This guide has been developed to inform new ministerial officers working with and alongside the public service to serve the government of the day.

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Foreword

In Victoria, ministerial officers and public servants fulfil different but complementary roles to serve the Government and its ministers.

Effective relationships between departments and ministerial offices are crucial to ensuring that ministers have the information, advice and support they need to exercise their powers and meet their responsibilities to account to Parliament and the public for the performance of their portfolios.

This guide has been developed to inform new ministerial officers working with and alongside the public service to serve the government of the day. It provides an overview of the roles of ministerial officers, departmental secretaries and departmental liaison officers, and the relationships between these parties.

This guide is not intended as the definitive reference on working as a ministerial officer. Rather it sets out some of the key facts, and answers some questions about the Victorian public sector that can help incoming ministerial officers to undertake their roles.

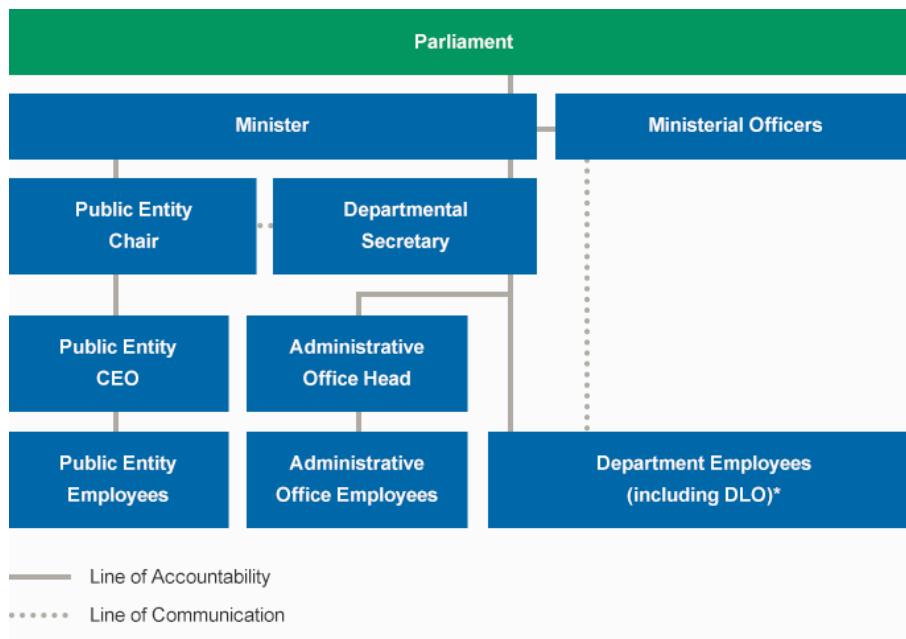


Roles and responsibilities

Victoria operates in accordance with the Westminster system of government.

[Figure 1](#) shows the lines of accountability and communication:

- Ministers are accountable to the Premier as leader of the Government. They are also accountable to Parliament for the performance of the departments, administrative offices and public entities in their portfolios. These accountabilities are distinct from Ministers' responsibilities as members of Parliament.
- Ministerial officers are employed by the Premier and accountable to their Minister.
- Departmental secretaries are employed by the Premier and accountable to their Ministers.
- Departmental employees including departmental liaison officers (DLOs) are employed by and accountable to the secretary.
- Administrative office heads are employed by the Premier and accountable to the secretary for the general conduct and management of the administrative office. They may also report directly to Ministers.
- Administrative office employees are employed by and accountable to their administrative office head.
- Public entity directors are accountable to the Minister, unless otherwise specified in legislation.
- Public entity chief executive officers (CEOs) are accountable to their board or board chair.
- Public entity employees are accountable to their CEO.



* Direct lines of communication between ministerial officers and department employees (including the DLO) are subject to the discretion of both the minister and the secretary.

Figure 1: Key lines of accountability and communication

Governor, Ministers and ministerial officers

Describing how the different roles of government work together

Governor

The Governor is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Premier to act as her representative as Head of State in Victoria.

Although the Governor is the Queen's representative, it is the Governor and not the Queen who exercises the powers of Head of State.

The Governor has constitutional and ceremonial responsibilities. When the Governor is absent from the state, or unable to act, the Governor's duties are fulfilled by the Lieutenant Governor or by an Administrator.

Premier, Special Minister of State and Ministers

The Premier, Special Minister of State and Ministers are accountable to Parliament.

The Premier is the head of the Victorian Government as the elected leader of the party or parties holding a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Special Minister of State oversees public sector administration and reform.

Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the administration of the Acts of Parliament assigned to them. They are also responsible for the operation of any departments, administrative offices and public entities that are part of their portfolios. Ministers are appointed by the Governor to a portfolio on advice of the Premier.

The General Order and its supplements are the guiding documents for determining the Minister for each piece of legislation and the associated ministerial powers and responsibilities. The [General Order](#) is published on the Department of Premier and

Cabinet website. The Premier determines the makeup of ministerial portfolios and departments.

Examples of portfolios include health, education and justice.

Departments are created, abolished and altered by Order in Council under the Public Administration Act 2004.

The expression 'machinery of government' refers to the allocation and reallocation of functions between departments and Ministers. The Premier is responsible for machinery of government matters in Victoria.

Executive Council and Governor in Council

The Executive Council is a formal, weekly meeting of the Governor and Ministers (the standard practice in Victoria is for four Ministers to attend each meeting).

Upon taking office Ministers are sworn in for life as members of the Executive Council, which entitles them to the style 'the Honourable'.

Wide-ranging powers, including the making of regulations, appointments to government bodies and arrangements in emergency situations are delegated by Parliament to the 'Governor in Council' (i.e. the Governor acting on the advice of the Executive Council).

In practice the Executive Council does not operate as a deliberative body.

Cabinet

Cabinet consists of the Premier and all Ministers. The Premier is the chairperson of the Cabinet. By convention, the Cabinet is the mechanism through which the Government makes decisions on policy, the legislative program and administrative issues. It is a formal meeting of Ministers but has no legal status or powers.

Cabinet and cabinet committees are forums in which Ministers, while working towards a collective position, can discuss proposals and a variety of options and views.

The openness and frankness of discussions in the cabinet room are protected by the strict observance of confidentiality. From time to time ministerial officers and public service employees may be invited to attend a meeting of the Cabinet or a cabinet committee.

Ministerial Officers

Ministers are supported by ministerial officers who provide advice on policy and other issues such as stakeholder engagement.

Ordinarily a Minister's most senior ministerial officer will be his or her chief of staff.

Ministerial officers are employed under section 98 of the Public Administration Act. They are employed by the Premier and assigned to Ministers to assist with performing their duties.

Ministerial officers are not public service employees and do not have authority to direct secretaries or public service employees. Their terms of employment are governed by their employment contracts (which could include enterprise agreements) and any codes of conduct determined by the Premier.

Ministerial officers:

- advise the Minister (this advice supplements departmental advice)
- assist the Minister to administer his or her portfolio responsibilities
- assist the Minister to formulate government policy
- assist the Minister to disseminate information to the department, stakeholders and the public
- assist the Minister as a member of both the Cabinet and Executive Council
- assist the Minister in his or her parliamentary role in so far as that role relates to the discharge of the Minister's duties as a Minister of the Crown. (As members of Parliament, Ministers also receive support for their parliamentary role from electorate officers, who are employed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council acting jointly.)

The Minister determines how their office functions. Other functions that ministerial

officers may undertake include:

- management of the Minister's diary
- coordination of media advice
- liaison with other ministerial offices.

Ministerial officers need to understand the protocols of their Minister's office and the duties they are expected to perform.

Department of Parliamentary Services

The [Department of Parliamentary Services](#) is a department of the Parliament of Victoria. It supports Ministers and staff in electorate and parliamentary offices by providing:

- information technology services including hardware and software procurement and installation
- services and advice related to conditions of employment and remuneration including payroll, human resources and occupational health and safety services
- services related to training budgets, mobile phones and car fleet arrangements
- insurance arrangements with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA)
- payments regarding office budgets and allowances.



Victorian public sector

The Victorian public sector comprises the Victorian Public Service, public entities and special bodies.

The public sector supports the government of the day in serving the Victorian community. This is done by:

- providing public services
- supporting Ministers in developing and implementing policies and legislation
- building and maintaining physical and social infrastructure
- managing assets and resources
- funding and monitoring outsourced service providers
- administering state finances.

The Public Administration Act establishes the legislative framework for good governance in the Victorian public sector. Public sector employees, including departmental secretaries, serve the government of the day and are required to remain apolitical. They must act in accordance with the public sector values specified in section 7 of the Public Administration Act that are further defined in the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#) issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. As such, they must

- **responsiveness**
- integrity
- impartiality
- accountability
- respect
- leadership
- and promote the human rights set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.



In other jurisdictions, ministerial officers are also required to act in accordance with codes of conduct. For example, the Queensland [Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff Members \(PDF\)](#) (PDF) includes provisions that specifically recognise the respective roles of ministerial staff and public service employees.

Victorian Public Service

The public service consists of persons employed under Part 3 of the Public Administration Act. It includes public service bodies (such as departments, administrative offices and the Victorian Public Sector Commission), as well as public entities and special bodies that employ staff under Part 3. The public service provides policy advice to Ministers and implements government policy. It is responsible for the delivery of government services and programs, and for delivering the Government's legislative and regulatory agendas.

Policy advice provided by public service employees is not the same as policy advice provided by ministerial officers. Public service employees provide impartial advice; ministerial officers, on the other hand, can provide advice that has a political context, and are able to do so as they are not public service employees.

Departments

Departments are policy advisers and program administrators for Ministers and the Government. In Victoria, each department advises and supports specific Ministers and their ministerial portfolios. Departments are the means through which government policy is implemented, and they can be thought of as an administrative extension of the Minister. Departments are part of the executive and do not have separate legal identity.

Departments are staffed by public service employees employed by the secretary under Part 3 of the Public Administration Act. The secretary makes independent employment decisions based on merit. The decisions are not subject to a Minister's general power of direction.

The terms 'central agency' and 'line department' are used to describe the functions of departments. A central agency has whole of government policy responsibilities. In

Victoria, the central agencies are the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF). A line department, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for portfolio specific policy development, planning and delivery of services.

The department, via the secretary, is the minister's principal source of advice and support on the operations of his or her portfolio. As part of this role, departments often:

- work with and provide guidance to public entities on public administration and governance
- assist with liaison between public entities and their Ministers, and between public entities and central agencies (DTF and DPC)
- advise Ministers on board appointments
- alert Ministers to significant developments and provide advice on options for action
- assist Ministers in accounting to Parliament for the actions and performance of public entities.

Secretaries

Each department is headed by a secretary, who is employed by the Premier. The secretary is responsible to their Minister for the operations of the department and for advice on all operational matters relating to the department, administrative offices and public entities. Each secretary reports to specific Ministers. Departments are staffed by public service employees employed by the secretary.

Secretaries are the principal portfolio advisers to the Government. They provide advice on policy matters and assist Ministers to maintain an awareness of operations within their portfolios, often acting as the primary contact between Ministers, public entities and stakeholders.

Secretaries' responsibilities include:

- keeping Ministers informed of significant issues within the portfolio
- playing a leadership role in developing major policy initiatives

- overseeing the development of policy solutions
- maintaining an awareness of the social and political landscape
- facilitating and supporting relationships between Ministers and portfolio agencies
- supporting Ministers to manage relationships with portfolio stakeholders
- overseeing the efficient and effective delivery of government policies, services and programs
- undertaking formal negotiations and building relationships between their department, the commonwealth and other states and territories on portfolio related matters.

As head of department, secretaries have primary accountability for adapting programs and activities to align with the Government's direction and ensuring the department responds to the ways in which the Government seeks to develop and implement its policies and programs.

Secretaries are subject to lawful direction from Ministers but not from ministerial officers. The secretary in turn has authority to direct departmental employees.

Departmental Liaison Officers

Departmental Liaison Officers (DLOs) are employed by departments to assist Ministers and their offices with departmental liaison and administrative functions. As DLOs are public service employees and not ministerial officers, they must avoid assisting Ministers in ways that are or could be perceived to be politically partisan.

DLOs' responsibilities may include:

- assisting with the administration of the Minister's office
- assisting the Minister, the Minister's office and the secretary with correspondence
- coordinating briefings
- coordinating cabinet and parliamentary papers within the Minister's office
- channelling information between the Minister's office and the department
- overseeing the work of other departmental employees within the Minister's office (for example, administrative support staff).

Administrative Offices

Administrative offices are public service bodies established in relation to a department by the Governor-in-Council under section 11 of the Public Administration Act.

Administrative offices are similar to departments in that they are led by a public service body head who is employed by the Premier, employ their own staff under Part 3 of the Act, and perform activities under the direction and control of Ministers. The heads of administrative offices are responsible to the secretary for the general conduct and the effective, efficient and economical management of the administrative office. In some cases, legislation confers certain responsibilities and powers to administrative office heads for which they are directly accountable to the Minister.

Staff who work in an administrative office are public service employees. Examples of administrative offices include the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office.

Public Entities

Public entities are organisations that exercise a public function. They can be established in a variety of legal forms, including statutory authorities and non-statutory advisory bodies, to undertake a wide range of advisory, service delivery, regulatory and other functions. Victoria's public entities include employing bodies such as hospitals, schools, technical and further education institutions, emergency service organisations, and water and land management bodies. Also included are many public entities that do not employ staff, including ministerial advisory committees, most cemetery trusts and most crown land committees of management.

Typically, public entities have a board appointed by either the Minister or by the Governor in Council on the Minister's recommendation. The degree of ministerial control varies between public entities. The Minister's powers to direct a public entity are usually identified in enabling or umbrella legislation, or in the case of non-statutory entities, terms of reference. The board appoints a chief executive officer to manage the operations of the public entity, including employment arrangements. However, there are instances where the Government appoints an individual to govern and operate a public entity (for example, a commissioner).



The Public Administration Act specifies that the board of a public entity is accountable to the Minister for the exercise of its functions. It also specifies that the Minister is responsible to Parliament for the exercise of ministerial powers relating to public entities to:

- appoint and remove directors
- give directions and request information
- control or affect operations
- initiate a review of management systems, structures or processes.

Governance principles laid out in Part 5 of the Public Administration Act apply to public entities established on or after the Act commenced in 2005, or for which an Order has been made that these provisions apply.

The department is the principal source of advice to the Minister on public entities, including high level policy issues, strategic planning and significant proposals. The department assists the Minister in accounting to Parliament for the actions and performance of a public entity. The public entity, usually through its board chair, may also give advice to the Minister. A ministerial officer will need to be familiar with the protocols that the public entity and the department have established with the Minister.



Working with Departments

The minister and the secretary determine how the department can best meet the minister's needs.

This agreement forms the basis for an evolving and ongoing relationship with established protocols and understandings for interactions between the minister and the secretary, and the respective roles of the ministerial officers, public servants and departmental liaison officers in these interactions.

This section of the guide provides an overview of issues that incoming ministerial officers may consider in developing and maintaining an effective working relationship between the department and the ministerial office.

Portfolio Information and Advice

A large portion of a ministerial officer's time is taken with providing the minister with advice on the portfolio. The minister also receives advice from a number of other sources, including stakeholders and the general public. This information is in addition and supplementary to that of the departmental secretary and senior department staff.

When a ministerial officer commences, they should familiarise themselves with the briefings provided by the department. Secretaries provide incoming ministers with a comprehensive suite of briefings that may provide a useful point of reference for ministerial officers who are new to the portfolio.

The briefings for the minister may include:

- an overview of the key programs, services, clients, stakeholders and agencies, including the operations of public entities within their portfolio
- progress against the Government's policy objectives in their portfolio
- the status of key capital and infrastructure works
- how the department will support the ministerial office. This includes the financial expenses for which the department is responsible and for which the minister's

office is responsible.

A more comprehensive outline of the type of information that may be contained in initial briefings from secretaries to incoming ministers is at appendix B. A new ministerial officer may request a copy of these initial briefings, which are held in the ministerial office.

Departmental briefings to ministers contain key information prepared by the department. Appendix C provides a list of terms and key definitions that are frequently found in public service briefings. Ministerial advisers need to comply with any briefing protocols between their minister's office and the department.

The secretary is accountable for all departmental briefings and information that goes to the ministerial office. The department keeps records of all briefings, which are approved via specific authorising systems.

Relationships

Ministerial officers do not have any legal authority to direct public servants. All directions to departments and requests for information from the minister's office come from the minister to the departmental secretary and all responses from the department are directed through the secretary to the minister, often coordinated by the department liaison officer.

In practice, the secretary may delegate some of his or her functions to senior public servants. Nevertheless, the secretary remains accountable for the department's operations. A ministerial officer may, at the discretion of the secretary, have direct working relationships with specific senior departmental staff to allow day-to-day activities to take place effectively and efficiently. Ministerial officers need to be familiar with the established formal and informal protocols in order to maintain effective interaction. Issues incoming ministerial officers may wish to consider when establishing working relationships between departments and ministers' offices include clarifying how the minister and the department will interact and the expectations of each party. Particular areas for focus include the key contact points in each office (for example, contacts for major policy areas, program areas, and the media unit); briefing processes and protocols; and arrangements for administrative, operational and information technology support for ministers' offices.

Each minister will have preferences for how they and their ministerial officers work with secretaries and their departments. These methods of interaction need to be clearly understood by all parties to ensure effective relationships between departments and ministerial offices that support delivery of government priorities.

Key questions an incoming ministerial officer may wish to clarify in order to facilitate the relationship between the minister's office and the department are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Key questions for new ministerial offices



Theme	Questions
Liaison	What are the minister's priorities and preferred style of working? How do the minister and the department interact?
	What are the arrangements for regular meetings between the minister and the secretary (or delegated senior departmental staff)?
	At which meetings between the minister and the secretary (and the secretary's delegates) does the minister want ministerial officers present?
	What kind of working relationships have been established between the secretary and the minister's chief of staff, the minister's chief media adviser and other senior ministerial officers?
	Are there any parliamentary secretaries? What are their roles? What are their expectations of ministerial officers?
	How do the secretary and the department support parliamentary secretaries in the minister's portfolio or other closely related portfolios?
Delegations	What legal delegations has the minister made to the secretary? Does this affect the responsibilities of the minister's office?
	To which members of the secretary's senior leadership team has the secretary delegated key policy and advisory functions? Are the correct people in the department being contacted?
Communication	What is the level of detail the ministerial office requires on particular issues within the portfolio?
	What is the minister's preferred briefing style from ministerial officers?
	What are the protocols for communicating requests from the minister to the secretary for departmental advice or action?
Portfolio priorities	What are the minister's portfolio priorities?
	What are the public entities within the portfolio and what are their priorities? Do they have statements of obligations?
	Is there a status report on progress against priorities and issues to date?
Other	What financial expenses are the department responsible for? What expenses are the minister's office responsible for?
Systems and processes	How do administrative processes between the ministerial office and the department work?
	What are the systems of communication between the ministerial office and the department, and what role does the DLO have in these systems?

Portfolios

The different portfolios across government

This list is accurate as of 24 April 2023. Please refer to [Machinery of Government](#) or the list of [Victorian Government agencies](#).

Premier and Cabinet

Ministers:

- Premier
- Deputy Premier
- Minister for Government Services
- Minister for Industrial Relations
- Minister for Treaty and First Peoples

Department:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet supports its ministers to lead whole of government policy and reform.

Administrative offices including:

- Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel
- Office of the Governor

Special bodies including:

- Victorian Electoral Commission

Public entities including:

Treasury and Finance

Ministers:

- Treasurer
- Assistant Treasurer
- Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC

Department:

The Department of Treasury and Finance provides the Government with economic, financial and resource management policy advice to assist the Government in delivering its policy outcomes.

Administrative Offices including:

- Office of Projects Victoria

Public entities including:

- State Trustees Limited
- Transport Accident Commission
- Victorian Managed Insurance Authority
- WorkSafe Victoria

Education



Ministers:

- Minister for Education
- Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-prep

Department:

The Department of Education and Training leads the delivery of quality education for all Victorians from early childhood to higher education.

Public entities including:

- Public schools
- Technical and further education institutes (TAFEs)
- Victorian Institute of Teaching

Energy, Environment and Climate Action

Ministers:

- Minister for Agriculture
- Minister for Climate Action
- Minister for Energy and Resources
- Minister for Environment
- Minister for State Electricity Commission
- Minister for Water

Department:

The Department of Environment, Land and Planning supports thriving, productive and sustainable communities, environments and industries.

Public entities including:

- Environment Protection Authority
- Catchment management authorities
- Committees of management
- Parks Victoria
- Waste and Resource Recovery Groups
- Water corporations

Families, Fairness and Housing

Ministers:

- Minister for Child Protection and Family Services
- Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers
- Minister for Equality
- Minister for Housing
- Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Minister for Prevention of Family Violence
- Minister for Veterans
- Minister for Women
- Minister for Youth

Department:

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is responsible for child protection, prevention of family violence, housing, disability, multicultural affairs, LGBTIQ+ equality, veterans, women and youth.

Special bodies including:

- Commission for Children and Young People
- Victorian Disability Worker Commission

Public entities including:

- Family Violence Prevention Agency (Respect Victoria)
- Shrine of Remembrance Trust

Government Services

Ministers:

- Minister for Consumer Affairs
- Minister for Government Services
- Minister for Local Government
- Minister for Small Business

Department:

The Department of Government supports engagement between the Government and Victorians.

Administrative Offices including:

- Public Record Office Victoria
- Service Victoria

Public entities including:

- CenITex
- Consumer Policy Research Centre

Health

Ministers:

- Minister for Ambulance Services
- Minister for Health
- Minister for Health Infrastructure
- Minister for Medical Research
- Minister for Mental Health

Department:

The Department of Health leads policy focused on achieving the best health outcomes for all Victorians.

Administrative Offices including:

- Safer Care Victoria

Public entities including:

- Ambulance Victoria
- Public hospitals
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

Ministers

- Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery
- Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy
- Minister for Community Sport
- Minister for Creative Industries
- Minister for Employment
- Minister for Higher Education
- Minister for Industry and Innovation
- Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty
- Minister for Outdoor Recreation
- Minister for Regional Development
- Minister for Suburban Development
- Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
- Minister for Trade and Investment
- Minister for Training and Skills

Department

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions is focused on driving a strong and resilient economy that benefits all Victorians.

Administrative offices including:

- Victorian Skills Authority

Public entities including:

- Australian Centre for the Moving Image



- State Library of Victoria
- Victorian Arts Centre Trust

Justice and Community Safety

Ministers:

- Attorney-General
- Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
- Minister for Corrections
- Minister for Crime Prevention
- Minister for Emergency Services
- Minister for Police
- Minister for Racing
- Minister for Victim Support
- Minister for Youth Justice

Department

The Department of Justice and Community Safety is for a justice and community safety system that work together to build a safer, fairer and stronger Victoria.

Administrative offices including:

- Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

Special bodies including:

- Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
- Victoria Police

Public entities including:

- Country Fire Authority
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victoria State Emergency Service

Transport and Planning

Ministers:

- Minister for Planning
- Minister for Ports and Freight
- Minister for Public Transport
- Minister for Roads and Road Safety
- Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop
- Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Department:

The Department of Transport and Planning supports delivery of the Government's transport infrastructure agenda.

Administrative offices including:

- Major Transport Infrastructure Authority
- Office of the Victorian Government Architect

Public entities including:

- SafeTransport Victoria
- V/Line

Incoming briefings for Ministers

Ministerial officers will need to be familiar with the issues managed by the department to be able to inform Ministers about their portfolio.

One source of information is the briefings departments prepare for incoming Ministers. The briefings are kept in the Minister's office, are available from the department and may cover the following themes.

Overview of the department

- Departmental objectives, functions and operating environment; vision and mission, corporate plan and strategic priorities
- Organisational context, summarising the formation and development of the department and any agencies, and outlining any recent machinery of government or major organisational changes
- Overview of major client groups and services
- Overview of major areas of activity (eg. programs, service delivery, regulation, enforcement).

Overview of the portfolio's public entities

- Objectives, functions and operating environment; vision and mission, corporate plan and strategic priorities
- Overview of major client groups and services
- Overview of major areas of activity (eg. programs, service delivery, regulation, enforcement)
- Overview of budget including planning and performance requirements
- Lines of communication (eg. regular meetings).

Minister's legislated authority

- Legislation administered
- Legislated powers, functions and obligations

Critical situations requiring immediate attention

- Background and issues
- Options
- Recommended action.

Summary of strategic issues

- Critical and strategic priorities (eg. potential legal exposure, large public expenditure, governance or management issues, public sensitivity, trends and capacity to deliver services).

Potential / identified major risks

- Outstanding legal actions
- Performance audits / investigations of the department, administrative offices or public entities scheduled or underway
- Parliamentary committee reviews scheduled / underway
- Current media attention and, if so, issues
- Significant freedom of information requests
- Processes for managing these risks / issues
- Any potential conflicts of interest.

Department budget

Recurrent expenditure initiatives:

- New budget initiatives
- Savings strategies
- Workforce and other implications.

Recurrent expenditure performance, for each output group (and where applicable each element in the output group):

- Budget
- Expenditure to date
- Estimated end of year expenditure on an unchanged policy basis
- Action currently in hand or proposed to achieve recurrent expenditure budget
- Revenue initiatives (from latest state budget).

Revenue performance:

- Budget
- Received to date
- Estimated end of year revenue on unchanged policy basis
- Action currently in hand or proposed to achieve revenue budget.

Major and other capital projects overview:

- Budget
- Start date
- Total cost to date
- Latest state budget commitment
- Estimated completion date
- Total estimated cost.

Assets and liabilities.

Legislative and regulatory reform

- Bills before Parliament
- What legislative / regulatory reforms are planned and whether these reforms sit within:
 1. A national reform agenda
 2. The annual statement of government intentions
 3. Other whole-of-government strategies
 4. Portfolio or departmental strategic plans.

Commonwealth / state matters

- Issues for the portfolio relating to national reform issues on the Council of Australian Governments reform agenda
- Background to relevant ministerial councils, a statement of issues currently being addressed by these ministerial councils and the priority issues on each for Victoria
- Issues for Victoria within the portfolio's area of responsibility in relation to commonwealth funding, including a short description of all intergovernmental agreements, including national partnership agreements and implementation plans both finalised and under negotiation
- Any other commonwealth / state matters of priority for the department
- Any matters of priority in relation to dealings with other states (eg. cross-border issues).

Stakeholders

- Main stakeholders, issues and lines of communication (eg. peak bodies, advocacy groups, client groups, advisory committees, major service providers, unions, associations)
- Who the Minister should meet early within his or her term
- Opportunities to meet and engage with stakeholders.

Committees

- What internal and external committees the Minister is on (eg. inter-jurisdictional committees, ministerial councils, cabinet sub-committees, policy taskforces, etc.)
- Accountability of committees
- Role of and accountability to these committees
- Committee membership
- Why the committee was established
- Issues
- Structures in place to support ongoing evaluation of the role and effectiveness of the committee.

Dates

- Dates for the year ahead
- Leave arrangements for the Minister and the secretary.



Definitions

Definitions of terms that are frequently found in department briefings and memos.

Administrative Arrangements Orders

Under the *Administrative Arrangements Act 1983*, the Governor in Council can make Administrative Arrangements Orders (AAOs).

AAOs are primarily used to deem that references to a Minister, departments or officer in Acts and instruments under Acts be construed as described in the AAO (for example, where responsibilities have been reallocated by a new general order from a Minister named in an Act to another Minister).

AAOs can also include transitional or savings provisions for the continuation / completion of tasks commenced by (or under the authority of) an agency from which the functions are being transferred. An AAO is usually required when a new general order or supplement has been made. It ensures that the administrative arrangements are in place to allow references to a Minister, department or officer to be consistent with the currently intended allocation of responsibilities.

AAOs are published in the Government Gazette.

Administrative office

Administrative offices are public service bodies established in relation to a department by the Governor-in-Council under section 11 of the Public Administration Act.

Base review

A comprehensive review undertaken by the Department of Treasury and Finance of

efficiency, effectiveness and / or appropriateness of price.

Board

Body of appointed or elected directors who oversee the activities of a company or organisation.

Body corporate

An incorporated body, establishing the entity as a 'legal body' with responsibilities and provisions.

Cabinet

The principal decision making body of the Government. It consists of all Ministers of the Crown and the Parliamentary Secretary of Cabinet (also known as Cabinet Secretary). The Premier, as the leader of the Government is the Chair of the Cabinet. Cabinet is a formal meeting of Ministers but has no legal powers.

Charter letter

See portfolio priority letter.

Department

Departments are the central policy offices and program administrators for Ministers and the Government.

Direction

An instruction directed towards a board, or officers of an entity by a Minister or other public official with power to issue directions. The power to issue a direction may stem from legislation but a Minister has an inherent power to issue relevant and lawful directions to an entity within the Minister's responsibility. An entity must abide by a lawful direction addressed to it.

Establishing legislation

An Act of Parliament, set of regulations, statutory instrument or other document setting out the powers, functions and organisational structure of an entity.

Executive Council

The Executive Council, described in section 87A of the *Constitution Act 1975*, legally exercises the executive authority of the state. Through the council, Ministers tender advice to the Governor about the appropriate exercise of the powers and functions delegated by Parliament to the executive. When acting formally on the advice of the Executive Council, the Governor is acting as 'Governor in Council'.

Executive government

The executive is responsible for the administration of laws passed by Parliament and the delivery of public services. The executive comprises the Governor, Premier, Ministers and the administrative agencies of government such as departments and public bodies.

Financial audit

Review of the financial statements of a department or other public body to provide an independent opinion on whether the statements are relevant, accurate, complete and fairly presented.

Freedom of Information

Victoria's *Freedom of Information Act 1982* promotes public accountability by giving people the right to access documents held by government agencies. Under the Act documents can be obtained from Ministers, departments, local councils, most semi-government agencies and statutory authorities, public hospitals and community health centres, universities, TAFE institutes and schools. Requests for access to documents are made directly to the public body holding the documents.

Gateway reviews

Gateway reviews provide a structured process whereby short structured reviews are carried out at decision points in a program or project's life cycle, known as gateways. Gateway reviews are carried out by a review team consisting of experts or practitioners who are independent of the team managing or running the program or project. A gateway review is designed to be applied to high or medium risk projects involving:

- the procurement of services, construction, property or information technology
- change management projects
- any other projects or procurements using contracts.

Gateway reviews should be undertaken on:

- projects rated as medium or high risk on the project profile model
- projects nominated by any cabinet committees.

General order

General orders are made by the Premier. They allocate responsibility for administering legislation to one or more ministerial portfolios.

General orders and supplements can be found on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

Governor of Victoria

The Governor of Victoria represents the Queen in her capacity as Queen of Australia. The Governor is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Premier and acts as Victoria's Head of State.

Internal Procurement Unit

Each department has an Internal Procurement Unit (IPU) that is responsible for ensuring that procurement activity complies with Victorian Government Purchasing Board policy. The IPU assesses the department's procurement capability and prepares a capability development plan on an annual basis. It also identifies major procurement categories and reports annually to the accountable officer on the department's procurement activities.

Legislative Assembly

The Lower House of the Parliament of Victoria.

Legislative Council

The Upper House of the Parliament of Victoria.

Machinery of government changes

Changes in the allocation of functions between departments and Ministers.

Minister

A member of the Government, appointed by the Governor on the Premier's recommendation to be responsible for an area of administration. He or she is also a

member of the Cabinet and a member of the Executive Council.

Parliamentary committee

A parliamentary committee consists of a group of members of Parliament who conduct enquiries and make recommendations about topics of interest to Parliament.

Performance audit

An audit which evaluates whether an organisation or government program is achieving its objectives effectively, economically, efficiently and in compliance with all relevant legislation.

Portfolio

The specific set of policy responsibilities that a Minister oversees.

Portfolio Minister

The Minister responsible for the portfolio in which an entity is located. For example, the portfolio Minister for VicRoads is the Minister for Roads.

Portfolio priority letters

Letter from the Premier to individual Ministers which outlines policy priorities and expectations for the Minister's portfolio.

Public entity

Entities that undertake a public function or are owned by government. A public entity is established by an Act of Parliament, Governor in Council or a Minister. In the case of a body corporate, at least one half of the directors are appointed by the Governor in Council or a Minister.

Public sector

The public service, public entities and special bodies.

Public service

The public service consists of persons employed under Part 3 of the Public Administration Act. It includes public service bodies (such as departments, administrative offices and the Victorian Public Sector Commission), as well as public entities and special bodies that employ staff under Part 3.

Special body

Public bodies listed in section 6 of the Public Administration Act or declared to be a special body by the Governor in Council. They are exempt from certain provisions of the Act.

Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance

The Directions supplement the Financial Management Act by prescribing mandatory elements (procedures) that must be complied with by all Victorian Public Service bodies.

The three high-level components of the directions include:

- Financial management governance and oversight

- Financial management structure, systems, policies and procedures
- Financial management reporting

The Financial Reporting Directions are mandatory and must be consistently applied in the preparation and presentation of annual financial reports.

Statement of Expectations

The Statement of Expectations sets out the Minister's expectations of public entities including their objectives, strategic priorities and performance targets.

Statutory authority

A public entity that is created by specific legislation to deliver a government service. A statutory authority can be governed by a board (with multiple directors) or governed by an individual appointee.

Supplementary order

From time to time, the Premier supplements the current general order. A supplement varies the allocation of responsibility for legislation between ministerial portfolios. It may be used either to change the allocation of existing legislation, or to include newly enacted legislation. This means that the current general order needs to be read considering all subsequent supplements.

When a new general order is made, the arrangements set out in any previous supplements will be consolidated into the new general order.

General orders and supplements can be found on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

Victorian Government Purchasing Board

The Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) sets the policies that govern procurement of non-construction goods and services in all Victorian departments and some public bodies.

The VGPB's functions in relation to the supply of goods and services to departments and the management and disposal of goods by departments include:

- developing, implementing and reviewing policies and practices
- providing advice, staff training and consultancy services
- monitoring departmental compliance with supply policies and ministerial directions and reporting irregularities to the relevant Minister and the Assistant Treasurer
- fostering improvements in the use and application of purchasing systems and electronic trading
- establishing and maintaining a comprehensive database of purchasing data of departments and supply markets for access by departments.

